

HERO AND LEANDER

MARTIN SCHÜTZE



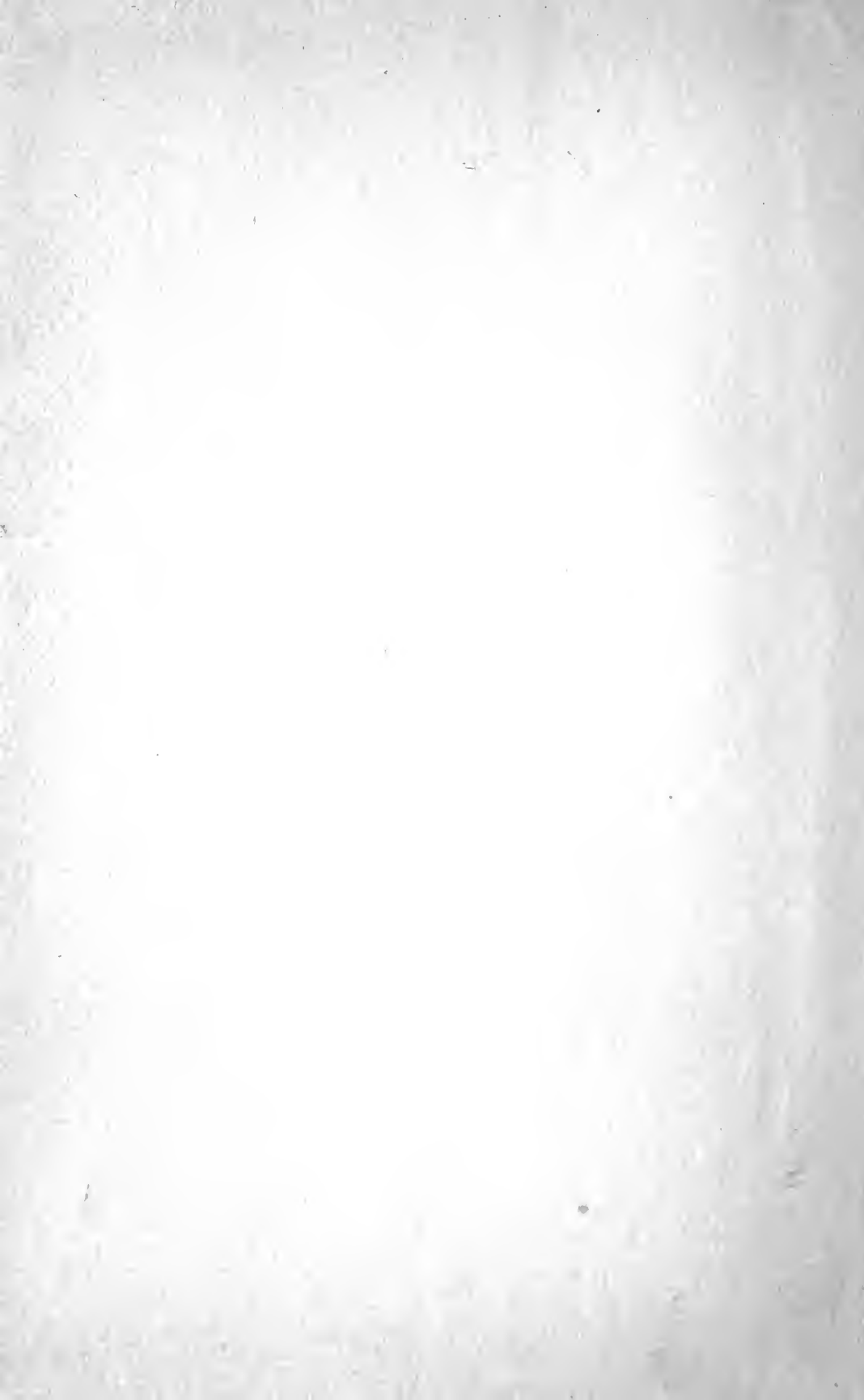
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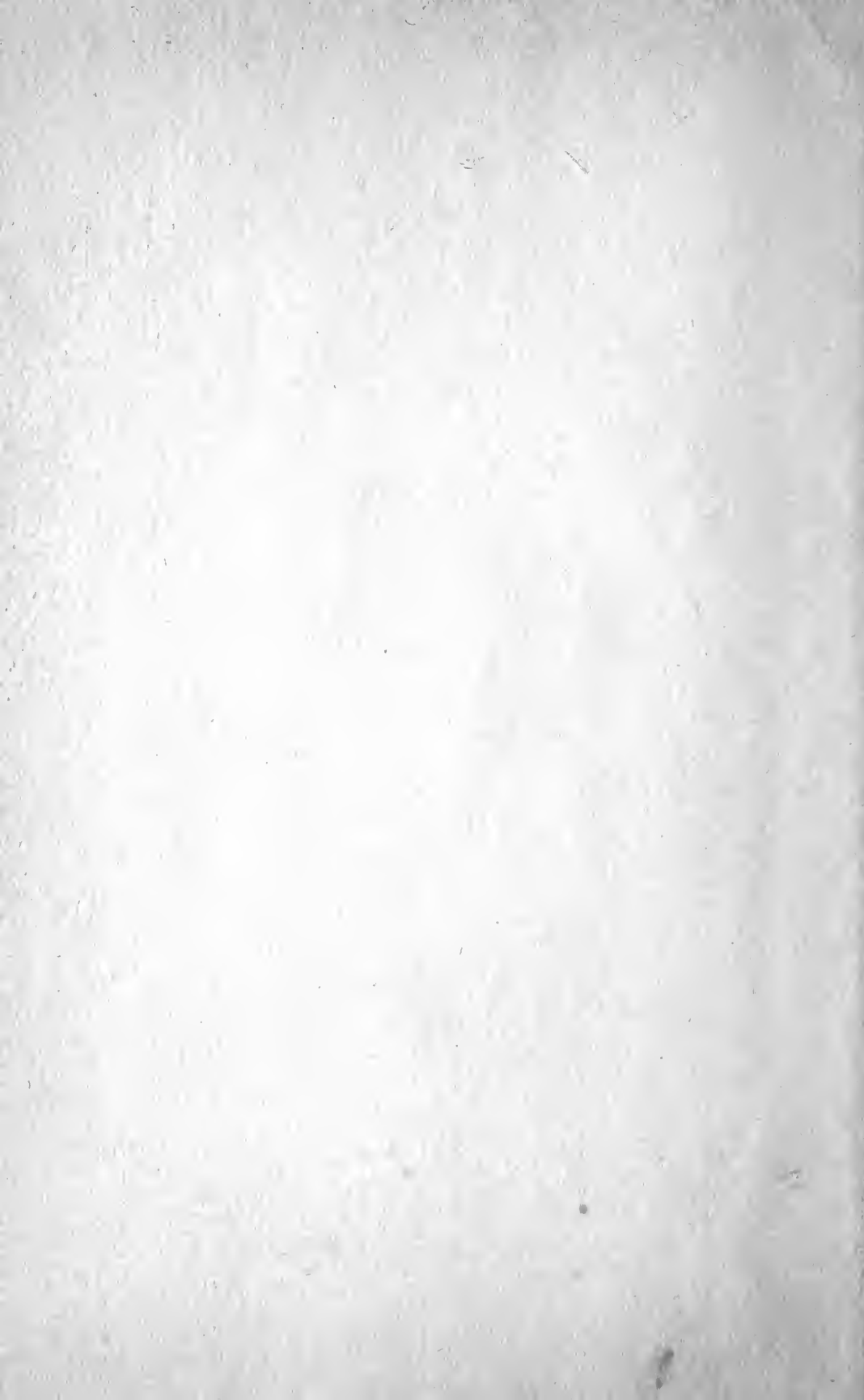
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HERO AND LEANDER



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A TRAGEDY

BY

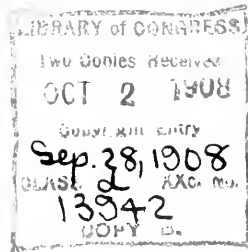
MARTIN SCHÜTZE



NEW YORK
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1908

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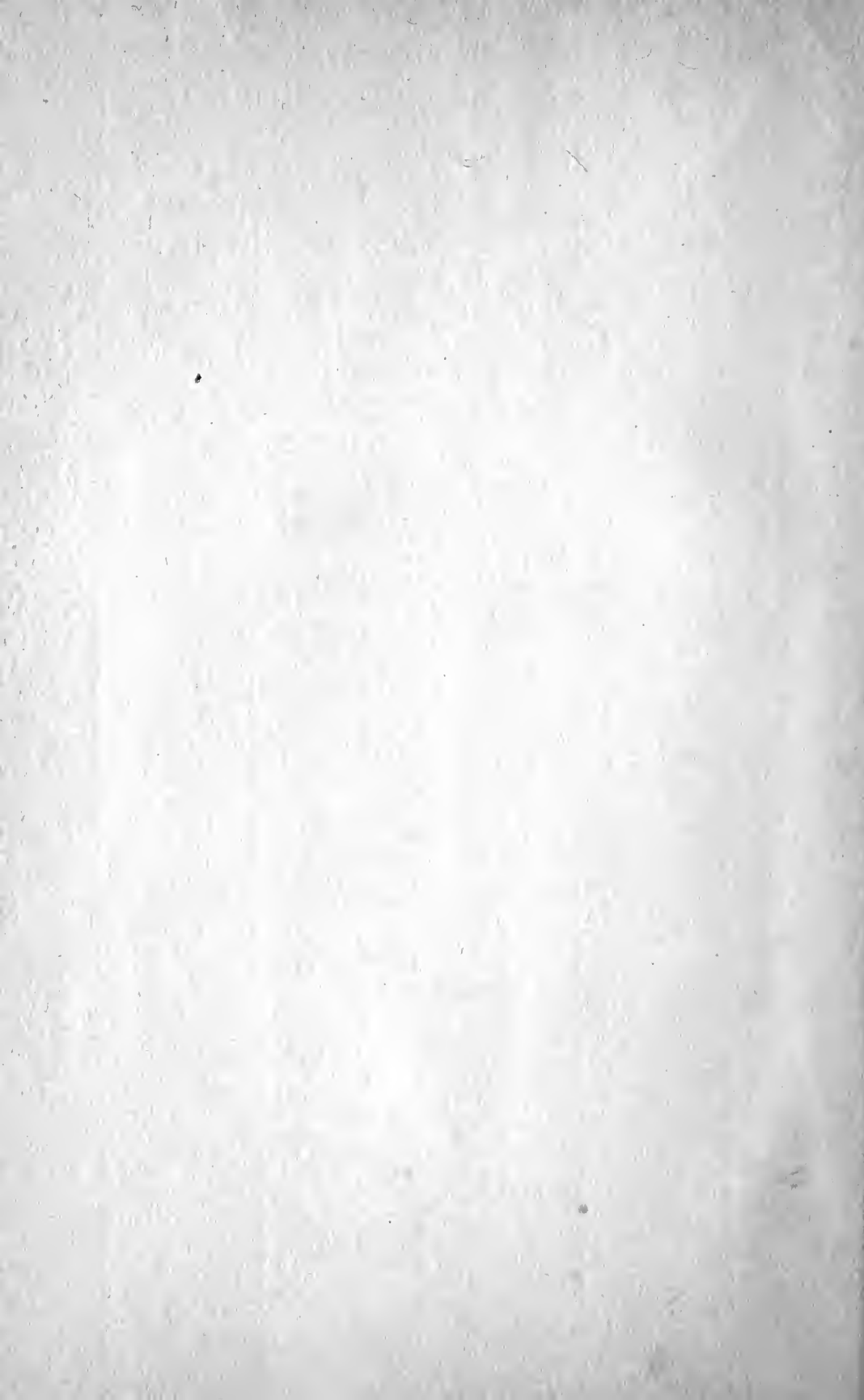
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TO
E. W. S.



HERO AND LEANDER

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

PEITHONOMOS, *Leander's father*

KALLIPHAË, *Leander's mother*

LEANDER

GYRINNO, *Leander's sister*

NAUKLEROS, *Leander's friend*

KRITOBOULOS, *an old man, friend of Peithonomos*

KLYTON, *lover of Chrysa*

STREPHON, *lover of Gyrinno*

Young men and girls; servants, etc.

HIEROPHON, *Hero's uncle, priest of the temple of
Venus Urania in Sestos*

HERO

PHILANTHË, *a maid of the temple, attending Hero*

CHRYSA, *a maid of the temple*

A madman

Two guards of the temple

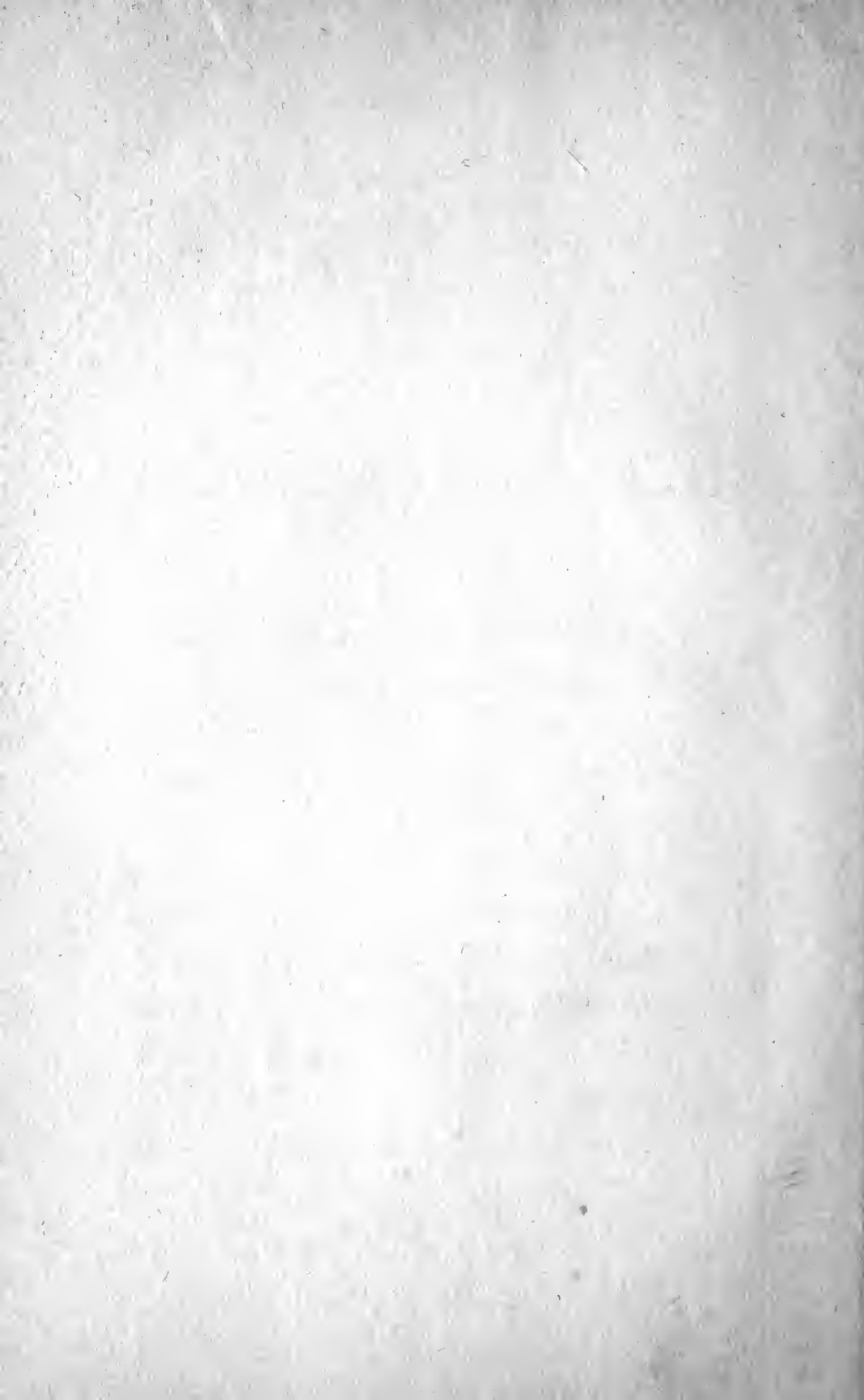
Two maids of the temple, attending Hero

Captain of the guards

People of Sestos; guards; maids of the temple

The action takes place in Sestos and Abydos, situated on opposite shores of the Hellespont

ACT I





HERO AND LEANDER

Act I

***A**BYDOS. The home of Peithonomos and Kalliphaë, Leander's parents. The time is the middle of the afternoon. On the right is seen the orchard-front of Peithonomos' house, built of weather-stained wood in simple Greek style, with the low Greek gable. A door in the centre leads out on the Doric porch. On the left and back are apple-trees in full blossom. In the distance, glimpses of the blue 'Ægean.*

It is the season of Blossom Festivals. Kalliphaë and some maids are decorating the columns and door with boughs of apple blossoms. There are also present, conversing quietly, watching the work of decoration, Peithonomos and Kritoboulos, an old man. During the first part of this act young girls dressed in white, with wreaths of apple blossoms on their heads, are now and then seen running through the orchard, pursued by young men, slightly disguised as Satyrs. A noise of merriment, shouts of laughter, singing, and all the sounds of irrepressible youth pervade the atmosphere, forming a gay background of stir, confusion, and noise for the events on the stage.

KALLIPHAË

(pausing, surveying the work of decoration).

Peithonomos, look at our work, and you,
Kritoboulos. Is there no droop of sorrow,

No shadow on the flush of gaiety?
No ghost of buried sadness, hollow-eyed,
Staring from flowery lids?—This is Gyrinno's
First Blossom Festival. I would not have
Her think that less of love goes into this
Than went into that other festival,
Three years since, when Leander was alive,
And brought his Hero to us.

PEITHONOMOS.

The familiar
Staid virtue of our home has taken on
The quality of Spring to raise a bower
For youth and love to meet. Gyrinno will
Be glad to bring her friends to us. Where is she,
Kalliphaë?

KALLIPHAË

(smiling).

She's hiding in the orchard,
Playing at make believe that she would fain
Elude her Strephon's ardor.

PEITHONOMOS

(laughing).

Ha, Ha, Ha!

KRITOBoulos

(as if quoting).

The heart of a maid and the feet of a
drunken man have ways past finding out.

*[Forms flitting through the or-
chard, shrieks of merriment,
pursuit, and capture.]*

PEITHONOMOS.

I do not hear the song. The boys have failed
To catch the girls.

KALLIPHAË.

I cannot take the spirit
Of merriment. Three years ago to-day
Leander sang the Blossom Song with Hero
In this same place. *(Pause.)* And then he
sailed away,
He and his friends, to the far Southland, never
To come again.

PEITHONOMOS.

Let us put by the past
At least to-day, for our Gyrinno's sake!
She has the present claim.

*[Again forms are seen flitting
through the trees, girls trying
to escape, with young men pur-
suing them. They disappear.
Shouts of boisterous mirth and
triumph.]*

KRITOBOULOS.

They celebrate
A different festival across the strait
To-day, in Sestos. Hero takes the vows
As priestess of Venus Urania.
The priest, her uncle, has prevailed at last.

KALLIPHAË.

Ye Gods of Love! Hero, who was to be
Leander's wife, the mother of his children,
Doomed to the barren service of that Goddess
Of fleshless love.

PEITHONOMOS.

Venus Urania is
Goddess of Love spiritual! We may
Not worship her, yet must respect the faith
That comforts others—

KALLIPHAË.

Though that faith assails
The love we celebrate!

*[More pursuit among the trees,
ending in a long continued
shout.]*

KRITOBOULOS.

Listen! More captives!
How full Life speaks in them!

KALLIPHAË.

Ah! But to think
That Hero's love should be held up to her
A loathsome thing.

[Weeps.]

PEITHONOMOS

(comforting her).

Three years work many changes
In youth. Perhaps she has forgotten him.

KALLIPHAË.

Forgotten him! You do not know how women
Like Hero love! (*with a rapt expression*).

She has withdrawn from all
The uses of life because Leander held
All of them for her. She has set his image
Among the unchanging stars, a deathless pres-
ence

Upon her way. Out of the silences
Of prayer his spirit speaks to her, and hers
Mounts, an unwavering spire of flame, to be
With him.

[*Sounds of a song, sung by young
men and girls, are heard faintly
in the distance. KALLIPHAË
pauses, listening.*

PEITHONOMOS.

The girls have all been captured. They are
Singing the Blossom Song together.

KALLIPHAË.

The sounds
'Are coming nearer. I can almost hear

The old familiar words of maidenhood,
And love, and motherhood.

[Silence; brief pause of listening.

*Then the song is resumed much
nearer, but not near enough for
the words to be recognisable.
KALLIPHAË speaking with rapt
expression, as if repeating the
words sung.*

Apple Blossoms on the bough
Light and Life possess you now—

[The song ceases.

KALLIPHAË

(excitedly).

They are coming; listen!
How near it sounds. *(Listening; disappointed.)*
Why do they stop? What does
This sudden silence mean? They must be near
The orchard. I will steal upon them there.

*[Goes back with eager gestures,
looking back and left, leaving*

PEITHONOMOS *and* KRITOBoulos *in the centre.*

PEITHONOMOS

(looking after her with affectionate humour).

Ah! who will sound a woman's heart! Her
heart,

A while ago, was stricken at the thought
Of merrymaking; now she acts the maiden
At her first Blossom Festival!

KRITOBoulos

(as if quoting).

A youth loves a maid,
A man, the mother of his children;
But a woman loves Love.

[During this speech some girls and boys, not noticed by the speakers, have crept up from the left. Suddenly a girl puts her hand over PEITHONOMOS' eyes from behind, another does likewise to KRITOBoulos, calling.

THE TWO GIRLS.

Guess! Guess!

[*At the same time KALLIPHAË is led in from back, captured by GYRINNO and STREPHON in the same manner. The young men and girls come in from all sides, laughing and shouting.*

BOYS AND GIRLS.

We did surprise you. We did capture you!

KALLIPHAË

(*in an insinuating manner*).

What shall the ransom be, Gyrinno?

[GYRINNO *lets go of her; they kiss; PEITHONOMOS and KRITOBoulos are also released. KALLIPHAË and the young people occupy the centre, left and back; PEITHONOMOS and KRITOBoulos somewhat to the right.*

PEITHONOMOS.

Let

Us see your prizes ere we have the feast
With songs and dancing.

[*Young people range themselves in a semicircle on the left, facing KALLIPHAË. PEITHONOMOS and KRITOBOULOS a little less central at the right of KALLIPHAË. When they have taken their places, it is noticeable that, while every young man has his girl, KLYTON is without a companion, standing at the left end of the semicircle, somewhat separated; moody, self-absorbed.*

KALLIPHAË.

Klyton, you alone

Have no companion?

[*KLYTON looks embarrassed. Laughter among the young people.*

KLYTON

(slightly sentimentally).

Do not think of me
Where every one is happy!

GIRL

(good-naturedly).

Klyton cannot be happy with ordinary girls.

YOUNG MAN

(aping KLYTON's sentimental bearing).

He is for the higher life.

[Good-natured laughter.]

STREPHON

*(Likewise, he and the speaker following him lay
ironic stress on the word "moon").*

He has married a mermaid. She lives east
of the sun and west of the moon; and their
children are Will-o'-the-wisp, Gold-of-the-Rain-
bow, and Fire-of-the-moon!

FIRST YOUNG MAN.

And his father-in-law is an old frog that turns up his eyes at the moon—

STREPHON

(with a gesture of mock spirituality).

And says: "Purify me, Brekekekex, purify me."

[Accenting and intoning "Purify me" in the same manner as "BREKEKEKEX." Laughter among the young people.]

FIRST YOUNG MAN

(chaffing him).

Klyton, why don't you ask the priest to give your Chrysa a leave of absence for the Blossom Festival?

[Laughter.]

KLYTON

(sulkily).

Maybe I shan't need his consent!

YOUNG MAN.

Going to carry her off? Good for you! We'll help you! That priest!

PEITHONOMOS

(seriously, with friendly disapproval).

A bitter tune,
And one ill chiming with the Blossom Song!

KALLIPHAË

(to the young people, as if to change the subject).

Sing me the last verse of the Blossom Song.

YOUNG PEOPLE.

Yes, we will.

[They sing. After the first two lines of the song some one comes in a great hurry. He takes PEITHONOMOS aside, speaking in his ear. PEITHONOMOS starts; his gestures are those of emphatic doubt. The messenger replies with excited gestures, which express some doubt; PEITHONOMOS and messenger exeunt left back in great

haste. KALLIPHAË notices his departure, but is absorbed in the song.

Apple Blossoms on the ground,
That fruition may abound—
Gathers now the wedded earth
In a fierce creative strife,
In relentless urge of birth,
All the energies of life.
Maiden, art intent to hear,
As the world around thee swells
With the pledges of the year,
Biddings of thy wedding bells?—
Apple Blossoms on the ground,
Life's fulfilment shall abound.

KALLIPHAË

(absorbed, repeating to herself).

Life's fulfilment shall abound.

[Two persons come running from the back, whispering to the young people. There is a stir

of excitement and whispered communication among them. Suddenly they all, as with one impulse, rush off left back, following PEITHONOMOS. KALLIPHAË and KRITOBOULOS are left alone.

KALLIPHAË

(in alarm, to KRITOBOULOS).

What does this mean?

[There is heard a confused distant tumult of voices, rapidly becoming more distinct. Sounds like: "Home," "Back" ". . . ander . . . ander," detach themselves. KALLIPHAË, speechless with conflicting emotions, gradually turns toward the background. She begins to sway. She is on the point of falling forward when there

comes rushing in LEANDER, catching her in his arms. He is trim, tense, and lithe, like a runner, deeply tanned, dressed in a short sleeveless tunic—the Doric chiton,—sandals; no sword, nor helmet.

LEANDER

(embracing her).

Mother, mother!

KALLIPHAË.

Leander! My son! My son! My Leander!

LEANDER.

They tried to stay me, sending messengers
To sicken you with dilute draughts of joy!

[Embraces her again.]

KALLIPHAË.

My son! My lost son!

LEANDER.

Lost? Why do you say:

Lost?

KALLIPHAË.

We thought you dead!

LEANDER.

Dead? Men that have Love
And Hope as watchers o'er them do not die
Easily.

KALLIPHAË.

Those that go abroad are ever
Less anxious than they that remain.

LEANDER AND KALLIPHAË

*(embracing; simultaneously, with renewed
tenderness).*

Mother!

My son!

*[Many persons come running from
the direction of the sea, the
girls and young men surround-
ing LEANDER'S companions,
among whom NAUKLEROS,
who is about five years older*

than LEANDER, is the most conspicuous. They shout: "Leander has come home again. They are safe; they are heroes! Hail! Hail!"

PEITHONOMOS

(bringing up the rear; panting; shouting).

Kalliphaë, our son, our son!

[Father and son embrace.

NAUKLEROS

(going to the mother).

All has gone well and prosperously. Good fortune

Was with us at the last; though I should not
Be here to tell you this, but for your son
Who saved my life.

LEANDER

(simply, to KALLIPHAË).

A common chance of battle—

KALLIPHAË

(to NAUKLEROS).

That proved Leander's boon no less than yours!

YOUNG PEOPLE.

Hail! Hail! Leander! Tell us the story of
your adventures. Story! Story!

PEITHONOMOS

(almost beside himself with joy).

[During his speech, LEANDER notices old KRITOBoulos. He goes up to him; they greet each other affectionately.]

Ah! We'll have such a festival as never
Was seen before. You are Leander's guests,
All, all of you. *(Calling to attendants:)*

Set tables amid the trees.

Go, bid the steward bring the choicest wines;
Plunder our stores of all the best they hold.
Don't lag. This Blossom Festival shall go
Down into legend!

[Joyous commotion among the assembled people. Servants bring tables, bustling about.]

LEANDER

(as if looking for some one whom he misses).

Blossom Festival!

Three years ago to-day . . . *(abruptly)*

Where's Hero?

*[Embarrassed silence. LEANDER,
with sharp anxiety.*

Tell me,

Where's Hero?

[Embarrassed silence.

KALLIPHAË

(with obvious effort).

Leander . . .

LEANDER

(in terror).

She is not . . . ?

KALLIPHAË.

No, she is

Not dead.

LEANDER.

Where is she? I must go to her!

KALLIPHAË.

You cannot see her.

LEANDER.

Not I? She is not married?

KALLIPHAË.

If 'twere but that!

[LEANDER *in speechless consternation.*

PEITHONOMOS.

My son, you know the priest
In Sestos is her uncle. When our love
For you buried its stricken hopes,—not sooner,
For he is a just man, the priest!—

LEANDER.

But Hero! . . .

Tell me of her!

PEITHONOMOS.

He won her to his faith.

LEANDER.

Won her? . . .

PEITHONOMOS.

She is to hold the office, held
By generations of her ancestors,
Of priestess in the temple.

LEANDER.

When? But when?

KALLIPHAË.

This afternoon she will be consecrated
In Sestos.

LEANDER

(in consternation).

Hero! *(Pause.)*

Are Love's records graven
In the heart, less stable than a casual track
Upon a sandy shore? Was the brave show
Of our united youth no more enduring
Than the frail concord of the waving grain
Before the sudden harvest steel? Our love,
The crowning flower, the sum of all the treasures
Of our expanding being, no more secure

Than any careless posy snatched to a brow
Hot with audacious frolic, to be tossed
Aside in altered mood?

KALLIPHAË.

My son, there was
No change in Hero's heart. But new demands
Beset her as a pauseless, rising current
A swimmer. The storm-tides of far-famed
deeds
Wear the dread blazon of implacable
Change no more surely than the unheralded
Thin trickle of monotonous routine
And silent longing.

LEANDER

(pause).

And I, all these years,
Was wrapt in the base din of strife and gain!...
What heart so dull, it should not heed the
prayers
She sent across the tempests and the crash
Of battle! Gods! What heart in all the world

But mine! Too late I see her, standing there
Upon the shore, conning with weary eyes
That endless moving page lined without break
With ridge on desolate ridge that held no
message

For her.

KALLIPHAË.

You cannot know, as I who daily
Saw her returning from her silent watch,
What agonies of doubt, what hopes renewed,
And bravely fostered—

LEANDER.

Faith gleaning a desert
To feed Hope wasting at her famished breast!—

KALLIPHAË.

What sharp assaults of terror, what quick starts
And ravishments of longing; what resigned,
Patient resolves, what faintings of the spirit,—

LEANDER.

What ceaseless hosts of dread and madness must
Have ground their multifarious tracks into

Her strong heart, ere the last stir of desire
Was stifled—Ah! I see it all, all, all,
Beloved! Was your love so true you had
To send your living spirit to that pale world
Where only phantoms walk their aimless ways
Amid the empty vastnesses, because
You sought my shadow there?

KALLIPHAË.

'Twas then the priest
Stole through the unguarded gateway of her
heart,
Bringing the changeling of his faith to oust
Your presence.

LEANDER.

Has that spider, lurking
Amid the empty shells of life he scatters
About his lair, spread his fine web for her,
To fatten on her sweet spirit? . . . I must go
To her . . . Hero, delay, delay! . . .
His craft
Cannot withstand our love!

PEITHONOMOS.

'Tis useless. Make
Your peace with the unalterable.

KALLIPHAË

(going up to him, kissing him).

Go,
My son! and may the Gods be with you!

LEANDER.

Will
You come with me, Naukleros? We will take
The ship's long boat.

(Calling to the young men:)

I need six oarsmen. Who
Will volunteer?

*[All the young men press about
him, shouting: "I, I, I. Let
us all go."]*

KLYTON

(embarrassed, eager, standing alone, calling).
Leander, let me go with you!

STREPHON

(calling).

You, too,

Dreamer of dreams?

KLYTON

(approaching LEANDER with flushed determination; too emphatic).

I also have some dealings

With the priest.

LEANDER.

Come then!

PEITHONOMOS.

Stay! I see Disorder

Stalking among you young men, whispering

Her fearful counsel! Keep the peace! The
priest

Is a great man. All plots of violence

Against him I shall do my uttermost

To frustrate. Violence turns on its master

A front more deadly than upon the foe

It served him to destroy!

LEANDER.

Father, Hero is mine.

I go to claim her from the priest.

*[Exit LEANDER, followed by
young men. The girls call to
the young men.]*

SOME GIRLS

(calling).

Make haste, make haste! We will wait for
you. And

Bring Hero back with you!

ALL THE GIRLS.

Bring Hero back with you!

ONE YOUNG MAN

(to the girls).

We will be back by sunset. Who knows?
We may have a Blossom Festival and a wedding
all in one.

Hail, Hero and Leander!

THE REMAINING YOUNG MEN AND GIRLS.

Hero and Leander!

[*Young men exeunt.*]

PEITHONOMOS

(*calling back* NAUKLEROS).

Naukleros! . . .

You are older than the others. See to it,
I charge you, that none break the peace. Crime
breeds

Worse crime, his progeny being stripped of all
Their parent's counterfeit of graces.

NAUKLEROS.

I

Shall do what man can do. Besides, no arms
Enter the temple grounds.

[*Exit after the others,* KRITOBoulos *accompanying him, gesticulating to him.*]

PEITHONOMOS

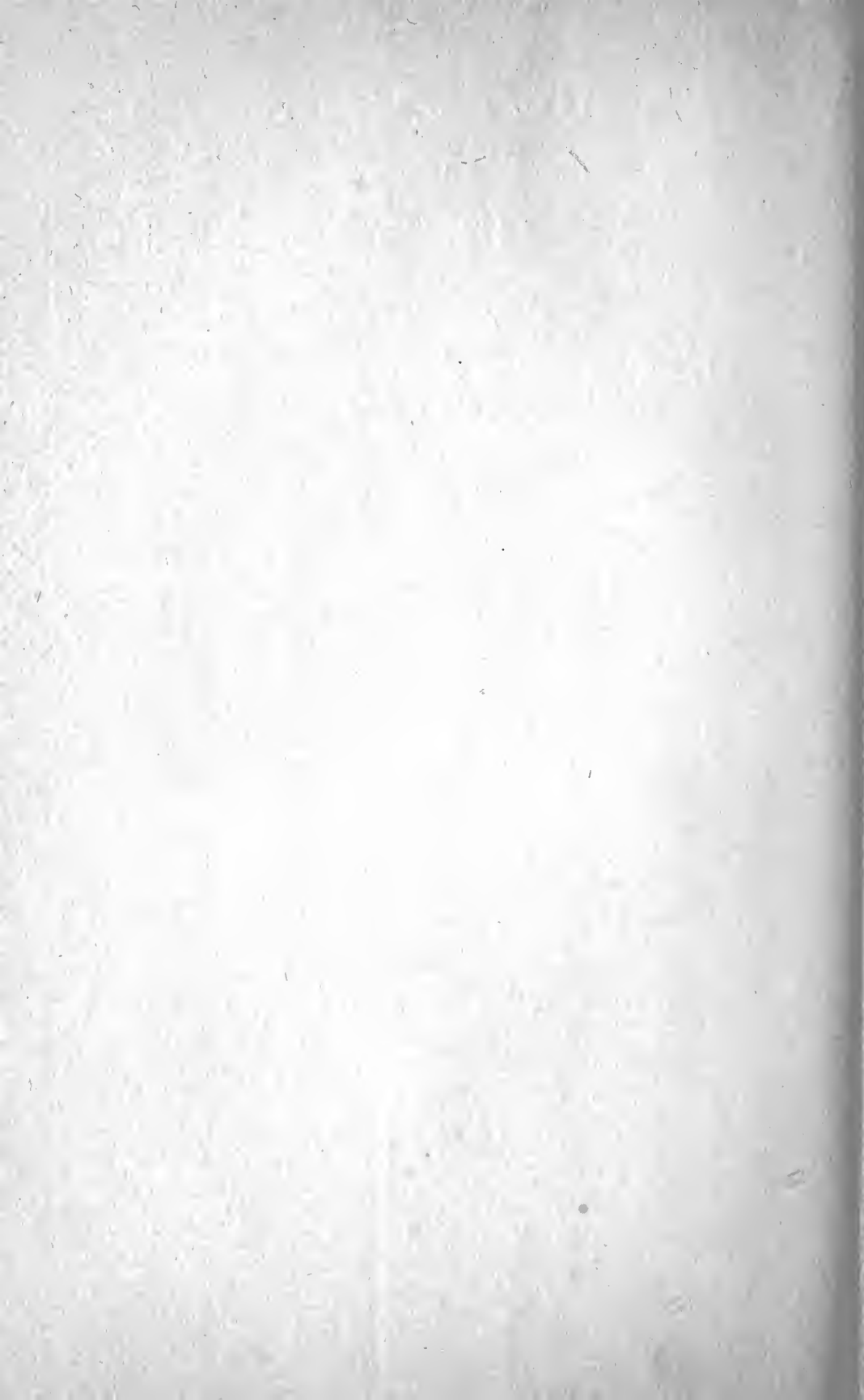
(troubled).

I fear disaster.

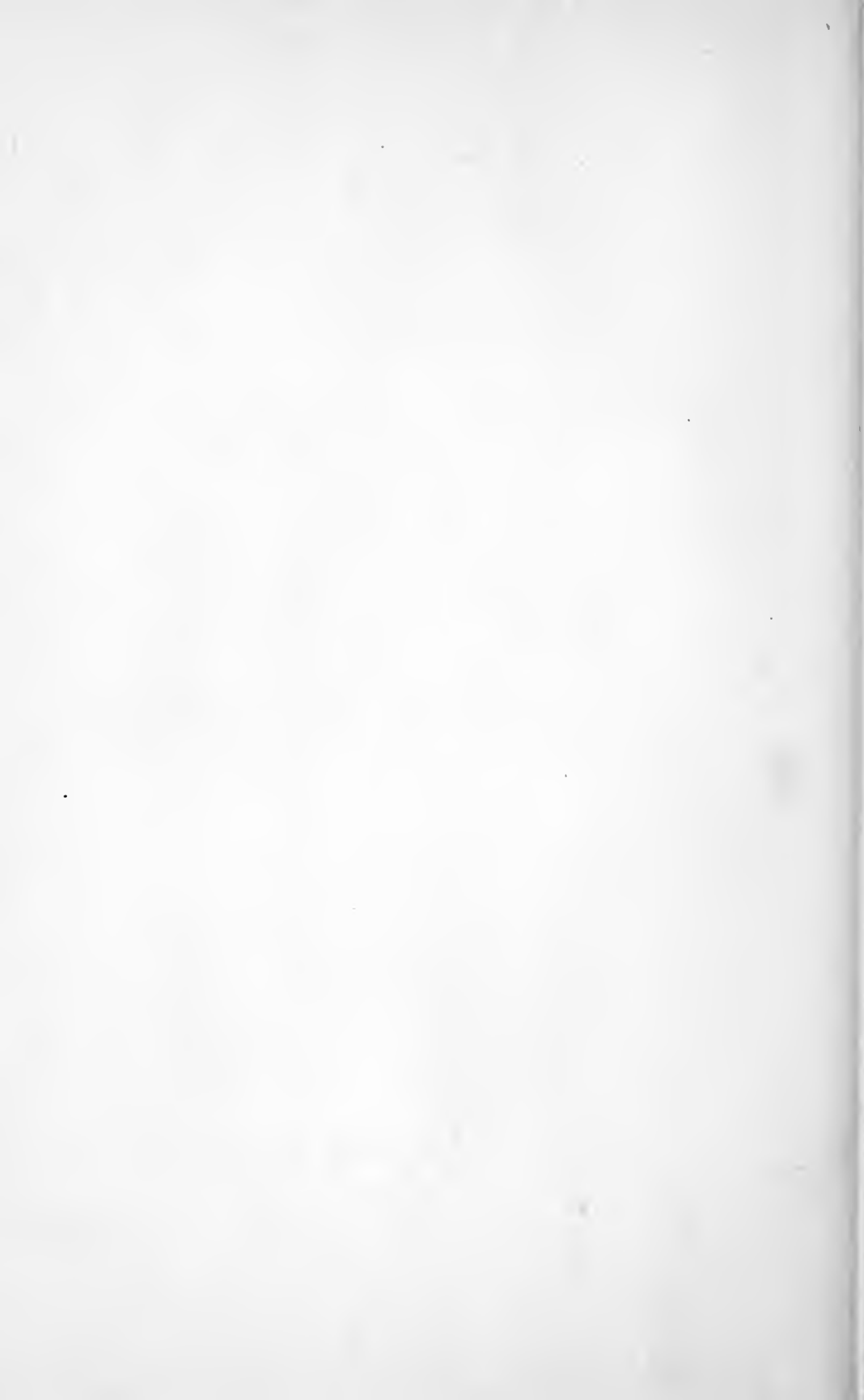
KALLIPHAË.

My son! The Gods be with you!

CURTAIN



ACT II



Act II

TEMPLE grounds in Sestos. Late afternoon of the same day. At the left, supposedly on the highest part of the grounds which descend in a long slope toward the Ægean Sea, the profile of the front of a Greek temple in a simple and severe style projects far enough to show the front porch of the peristyle and a little of the solid wall of the "cell." The columns of the peristyle are Doric. There are a few steps leading up the front, giving access to the open door in the middle of the front wall of the interior. This is the shrine of Venus Urania, the tutelar goddess of Sestos, whose image, unseen, is supposed to be in the enclosed interior.

The main scene represents an open place,

the sides of which give the impression of being straight and formal. At the right and back of this place are trees and shrubs of a dark colour, pines, cypresses, etc., arranged in a thin, formal order, and suggesting an unseen formal avenue leading at right angles from the back of the open place to a heavy dark-grey stone building with a tower in the right corner of the background. This building, clearly visible through the spare trees of the foreground, stands, about a quarter of a mile distant, upon a rocky shore with the bright blue Ægean Sea stretching beyond it. About the tower there cluster, in sharp contrast to the spare forms and sombre hues of the trees in the foreground, masses of apple-trees in full blossom. At the left of the tower there reaches out into the sea a rocky, forbidding shore line. This line is met, toward the left third of the background, by a high stone wall which shuts out the

horizon and is lost among the trees behind the temple.

[As the curtain rises, there are seen Sestan men and women, arranged in orderly ranks extending from the upper end of the temple across the open space. A few temple guards, in short brown sleeveless tunics, with short swords and helmets, have supervision of the people. Maids of the temple, in plain white peplums, with pine wreaths upon their heads, are drawn up, facing the temple, in double file equal in length to the front of the temple, somewhat to the right of an imaginary line running up the middle of the open space. All eyes are expectantly directed toward the main door of the temple. The

*conversation of the bystanders
is carried on in low voices.*

FIRST SESTAN WOMAN.

They have been praying a long time.

SECOND WOMAN.

They must soon come out.

FIRST WOMAN.

How beautiful she looked!

SECOND WOMAN

(with a sigh).

It must be wonderful to overcome all desires
and be like an immortal spirit.

FIRST WOMAN.

Did you notice the priest's face as they went
in together?

SECOND WOMAN.

I have never seen him so radiant. He seemed
to walk on clouds.

A MAN.

Hush! They are coming!

THIRD WOMAN.

Look at her. How pale she is!

FOURTH WOMAN.

She doesn't seem to be of the earth. She doesn't seem to touch the ground.

SEVERAL VOICES.

Hush! Sh! . . .

[*There issues from the door of the temple, which remains open, HERO, followed, at a distance of three steps, by the PRIEST. HERO is dressed in a white pep-lum, taken up about the hips. The pep-lum has a border of the rectangular Greek wave line in gold. She wears a myrtle wreath. The PRIEST wears a long purple tunic, with a similar border. HERO is very pale; her expression and bearing are ecstatic; her eyes seem filled*

with a beatific vision, looking into the far distance. The PRIEST'S bearing is that of solemn exultation. HERO pauses a moment on the top step of the porch, then descends in measured steps, remaining some steps in advance of the PRIEST. No word is spoken. When both have reached the ground, they turn so that they face the temple.

PRIEST

(raising his hands; very solemnly).

Venus Urania, that hast removed
Thy love from all encroachment of decay
And sensual disfigurement of earth,
To set it, high above the reach of passion
And weak affection, on the eternal ways
Of universal law, made manifest
Through the undeviating stars; grant this one,
The Chosen of thy Spirit, constancy

And strength and self-denying love to walk
Within thy sacred statutes.

(Turning and approaching HERO.)

Hero, have you
Searched all your heart, and found no troubled
voice

Muttering against the purport of this service?

HERO.

I have, and all my being craves to bear
Me witness in this sacred hour.

PRIEST.

Are you

Willing to put away selfish desire
And personal affection, that your soul
May hold no other but Her will?

HERO.

I am.

[Advancing toward the temple;

*PRIEST remaining behind, but
also turning toward the temple.*

*HERO raising her hands in
prayer.*

Goddess, whose spirit, having burst the bounds
Of sensuality, is fused throughout
The infinite starry spaces, grant thy servant
Virtue, that she become thy instrument
To exalt and purify the hearts of this,
Thy people.

PRIEST

(*Approaching HERO, who turns around; raising his hands over her; in an official tone of voice*).

Having renounced by solemn vow all bonds
Of kith and kin and service of the flesh,
Thou now art—

[*A commotion among the Sestans. Suddenly there dashes in from the right LEANDER, followed by some Abydan youths among whom NAUKLEROS and KLYTON are the most prominent. The Abydians are without arms. They post themselves on the right, facing the temple.*

LEANDER

(shouting).

Stay! I have a right to speak.

Stay, priest!

[At his first word, HERO looks up at him, with a swift movement, as if electrified. She gazes at him fixedly, her expression gradually freezing to blankness. She raises her arms a little, swaying slightly forward. Then her arms drop nervously down her sides. She stands motionless, her eyes fixed rigidly on LEANDER. She gives the impression of having been stunned by a sudden blow.]

PRIEST

(turning; looking sinister, surveying LEANDER, —pause; then:).

A right? Who is this dares disturb
The sacred ceremony?

LEANDER

*(ignoring the PRIEST, rushing up to HERO;
standing in front of her).*

Hero, speak for me, tell him of my right!

Recall the vows that bind you to me! . . .

Speak

Of the dear uses of our comradeship

In those rich days and years when each perception,

Each look and motion was a new avowal;

The influences of the earth and skies, of winds

And waves, the treasures rolled upon the shores

Of being in the expanding flux and reflux

Of pauseless seasons, were each one a pledge,

Adding new bonds to the union of our lives. . . .

[*Pause.*

PRIEST.

The Chosen of the Goddess knows no pledge

Save that within the keeping of the Gods. . . .

LEANDER.

Tell him, my Hero, how our love unfolded,

Crowding the seasons with united growth

More closely than the progress of the year
Joins blade to earlier blade, and flower to flower,
Until one common impulse swayed our minds,
And each new thought and knowledge, act and
plan,

Was bound in links of living harmony
To the deep concord of our being. Speak,
Hero, for me. 'Twill be myself who speak
Through you. . . .

[*Pause. HERO stands rigid, as if
not comprehending what is pass-
ing before her.*

PRIEST

(*trying to interpose*).

The priestess . . .

LEANDER

(*raising his hand, as if to brush the PRIEST
aside, continuing*).

Tell him the Gods smile
On righteous love. He cannot put asunder

What the Gods have joined. You are mine as
I am yours.

The spirits of our love walk the broad high-
ways

Of day, and throng the starry dome of night,
A radiant host. The flower of dawn pours it
From its dilating cup; the sun proclaims,
The breezes carry it abroad; the warmth
And fruitfulness of earth profess it; the waves
Shout it aloft to the resounding skies;
And high upon the sunset-battlements
It sits enshrined in golden splendour.

*[Pause; then continuing before the
PRIEST can interrupt.]*

Tell him,
Your heart unsays all that your erring lips
Were taught to speak by rote; that all the
world

Holds naught beside one presence; that even
seeking

In prayer the silences where dwells his Goddess,
You find naught but the voices of our love

Filling what were a waste of dumb despair
If they were stilled. . . . Speak, Hero. . . .

[*Pause. HERO's lips seem to
move, but no words come.
She continues looking at LEAN-
DER, as if under a spell.*

PRIEST.

The Guardian of the Shrine
Chooses the sharper emphasis of silence.
Take that for answer.

LEANDER

(*ignoring the PRIEST*).

What is it makes you dumb? . . . Is it the
hand
Of some compulsion forces back the throng
Of ready words? . . . it must be this press of
strangers
Greedy hanging on your lips; you are
Afraid lest the sweet vestment of our love
Be sullied at the hem by clumsy feet? . . .
Is it the spirit of this unnatural place

Laying a palsy on your speech? . . . Is it
This priest, dangling his power as jailers do
Their rattling keys before the furtive eyes
Of prisoners? . . . Or is it? . . . No, No,
No!

Speak, Hero! . . .

[Approaching more closely, lowering his voice, which is now very tender.]

Hero, speak to me alone,
In whispers, bidding me interpret. . . .

HERO.

(After several vain attempts, finally in a hard, unnatural voice, as if her throat were paralysed, almost shrieks out:).

I have
Forsworn the world and all its ways. . . .

LEANDER

(as if he had received a blow).

The world! . . .

'Twas I you used to call your world . . .
And now, one facile vow, one altered word,
Has spurned me into that poor exiled world,
A thing of lesser worth than this dull pebble
Beneath my foot. Oh, world! Oh, bitter change
Of words!

PRIEST

(stepping in front of HERO).

Enough! Go on your way, boy, nurse
In the retreats of boyish fairyland
Your pretty fancies, but forbear to trouble
This sacred hour of high realities
With what it pleases you to call your right.

[Motioning to guard.

Go, call the temple guards in force.

[Guard exit.

LEANDER.

A right, priest,
That whelms yours as the mounting tide of
spring
Engulfs the rigid ghosts of last year's weeds.

You played upon a woman's grief to force
A counterfeit of faith on her. She's free
To choose between your living death and Life
And Life's fullest intent. I must see her
Alone.

PRIEST

(*haughtily*).

The Chosen of the Goddess has
Pronounced the irrevocable vow.

LEANDER.

Hero!

HERO.

[*Gives signs of great agony. She begins to sway to and fro, her arms and face twitch. She tries to raise her hands with an imploring gesture toward LEANDER, but seems to lose control of her movements. She utters a long, despairing moan.*

Ah! . . .

PRIEST

(With swift decision to the guards, who have in the meantime arrived in numbers).

Guards, clear this space of all except
The people of the temple.

[As the guards advance toward the Abydans HERO utters a scream; she staggers; some maids of the temple support her. As LEANDER hears her scream, he groans in desperation, plunging into the guards.]

LEANDER.

For a sword now!

[The guards in overpowering numbers push back the Abydans, who are all unarmed. LEANDER struggles desperately, taking the offensive from the start.]

*At one time it looks as if he
might break through.*

LEANDER

(shouting during his struggle).

You must release her, priest, she has not
chosen! . . .

She took the vow in error, thinking me

Dead. . . . I must speak to her alone and she

Must make free choice. . . . The Gods see to
the heart

Of action. . . .

*[He has almost broken through the
guards.*

CAPTAIN OF THE GUARDS

(excitedly).

Use your swords if necessary.

NAUKLEROS

*(Throwing his arms around LEANDER, pinning
his arms to his sides).*

Leander, nothing is to gain, and all

To lose. Think of your parents!

[The guards, by sheer weight of numbers, push all the Abydians off right, following them. A number of guards remain.]

PRIEST

(with authority).

We will complete

The consecration.

[The maids form in line, as at the beginning of the act.]

PRIEST

(In a formal tone of voice, raising his hands over HERO, who, supported by two maids, seems unconscious of what is happening).

I consecrate thee now Priestess of Venus
Urania, Universal Virgin Goddess
Of Love Supernal. All the ties of Self
Herewith I strike from thee, and in their stead

I lay the ties of spiritual service
Upon thy forehead . . .

[Pause. In an altered voice.]

The maids attend the Chosen of the Goddess
To her accustomed rooms that she may rest.
Priestess, I beg to wait upon you later
To instal you in the tower that expects
Its mistress.

*[HERO slowly and mechanically
moves off and exit right, fol-
lowed by the maids by twos.
HERO'S face is expressionless;
her bearing relaxed as if bereft
of purpose.]*

PRIEST

(exultantly, to the people).

Hail! Hail! Be glad, People of Sestos,
You have again a priestess! Every day
Henceforth she leaves these sacred solitudes
At the appointed hour, to bring to all
The multitudes that throng the Gate of Counsel,

The divine message, binding every transient
Task of the Present to profound and calm
Concerns beyond. As the vast peace of evening
Offers a mirror of serene and boundless
Light to the anxious disarray of day,
Testing its virtue, so her hallowed presence
Confronts your troubled vision with the glory
From brows immortal shed, for test of truths
Eternal. Hail! My people, hail!

SESTANS.

Hail, Hail!

The Chosen of the Goddess!

PRIEST.

Peace be with you!

[*The PRIEST starts to go, making a gesture of dismissal. The Sestans break up in groups, making that stir of gladness and relief which attends the conclusion of a solemn celebration.*

MADMAN

(coming forward with silly dignity).

Peace be with you! I bring you the peace of the Great Nothing.

FIRST SESTAN.

What's he saying?

SECOND SESTAN.

Poor fellow! He thinks he's the priest.

THIRD SESTAN.

He used to be the priest's disciple, didn't he?

FIRST SESTAN.

He ought not to be allowed the freedom of the grounds.

[PRIEST *motions to a guard; as the guard approaches the MADMAN, the latter shrinks away from him, saying:*

MADMAN.

Don't touch me! Would you break the vessel of the Great Nothing? (*muttering to himself*). How the touch of people soils you! (*gesture of disgust*). Baa! (*Disappears among the Sestans.*)

[*Exeunt MADMAN and Sestans.*

(As, last of all, the PRIEST and the remaining guards are about to leave, LEANDER, dishevelled, his tunic torn, returns from the direction in which he was forced out; rushing up to the PRIEST.)

LEANDER.

Priest, I demand Hero!

PRIEST

(facing him, with determination).

The priestess dwells
In the Gods' keeping. She has returned to the
old

Tradition of her race, acknowledging
The higher duty of a larger service.

LEANDER.

Can you stem, by a pledge, the tides of the
ocean,
Or halt the thunder cloud by sacred rite?
Can you, by solemn ceremony, arrest
The buds of spring, or check the fruitfulness
Of summer? Priest, you cannot stay, by one
Rash vow, the tenor of our joint being! I
Must speak to Hero.

PRIEST

(with sardonic indulgence).

Youth is ever prone
To endow the passing moment with eternal
Validity, and clothe each painful loss
With tragic splendour, begging the future
To make a tyrant of its nursling past.

*[Some of the guards that drove off
the Abydians return hurriedly
from the same direction as*

LEANDER. *They are about to attack LEANDER again.*

PRIEST.

Peace, guards!

You know the sacred law, Leander,
And the law's penalty. Forbear to invite it!

*[Exit PRIEST, motioning to guards,
who follow.]*

NAUKLEROS

(returns).

Leander, come away. His heart is empty,
Even as those boundless spaces that he worships,
Feeding the fancy he calls love upon
A vast inanity. Pour not your heart
Upon a desert.

LEANDER.

I must see her, alone,
Free from the priest's constraint; must have her
speak
In words, however strange and hard, but spoken

To me alone. I cannot go from her
Thus!

NAUKLEROS.

'Tis impossible! She dwells apart,
In that dark tower by the sea. No road
Leads thither past the Gate of Counsel. Alone
The sun of morn can find his golden path
Across the sea. No boat, no swimmer threads
His way amid the jagged reefs, set close
Like giant caltrops in the seething current.

LEANDER

(absorbed; to himself).

Swimmer? . . .

*[Pause. Looking slowly and
thoughtfully toward the tower
and over the sea.]*

NAUKLEROS

(troubled, with forced cheerfulness).

Leander, come away! This is all done
And over with. Let's do something to drive

This poison from your spirit; something stirring!

Revive our swimming feats of old. Let's swim
The strait and race for home. Come!

LEANDER

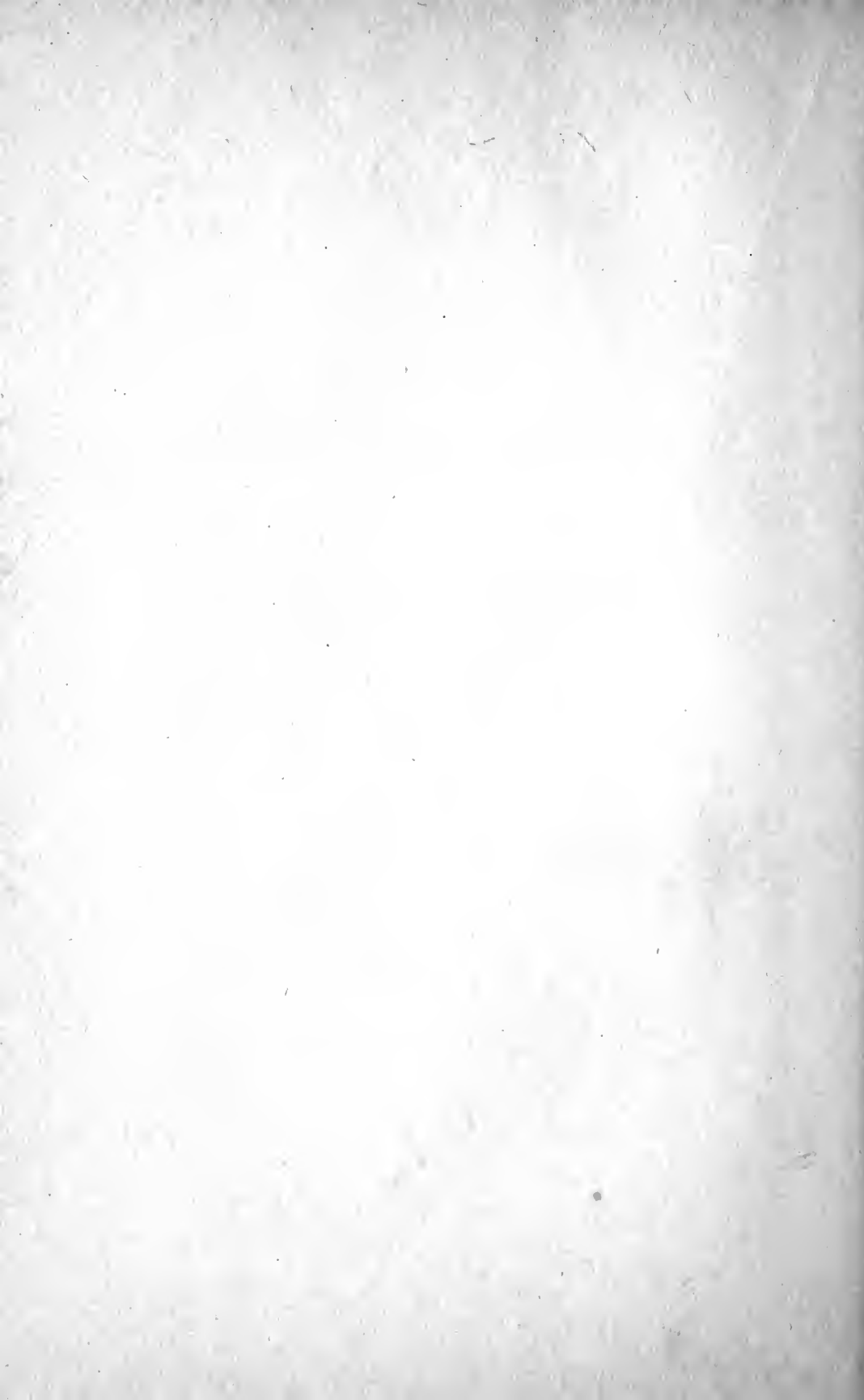
*(absorbed, speaking slowly, with even emphasis,
to himself).*

I will swim

The strait.

*[Remains preoccupied, while
NAUKLEROS leads him off.
Joyous shouts resembling the
words, "Hail! Our priest-
ess!" are heard in the distance.*

CURTAIN



ACT III



Act III

SCENE I

EVENING of the same day. Hero's room on the ground floor of the tower. The room is bare and depressing in aspect, having dark-grey stone walls, and few, severe furnishings, among them a lyre. Entrance door on the left. In the back wall a large projecting window, with window seat, giving upon the sea. In the immediate foreground of the sea vista, an ominous chaos of precipitous, jagged, dark rocks, with something like a narrow, many-angled sea-way through them. Scattered through this passage, submerged reefs disclosed by islands of white water; beyond, a wide expanse of sea, running in soft, oily, opalescent undulations. Above the horizon,

large, swelling clouds, such as in the eastern sky front toward the setting sun. Dusk has fallen everywhere except on the highest domes of these clouds, resplendent in golden light. On the right of the room, a door leading into another room.

[The stage is empty a few moments after the rising of the curtain. Then enter the PRIEST and HERO.]

PRIEST.

Hero, this is your home henceforward. Here
The even stream of all your days will pass
In the presence of the Gods that visit men
In solitude and the exalted peace
Of pious thought.

HERO

(Preoccupied, pale, expressionless, as if dazed, looks about the room slowly, but with unseeing eyes; answers nothing).

PRIEST.

No worldly ornament
Offends the proven temper of your mind
By vain distraction. Here you see the books
Guarding the wisdom of the greatest few,
Your writing instruments, and there your lyre
Devoted to the service of the Gods
Through sacred music.

HERO

(still speechless, nods).

PRIEST.

You are quiet, Hero.
The day has been exacting, and the awe
Attending on great consummations lays
The hand of silence on your lips.

[Paternally kind and solemn, laying his hand on her head, as if blessing her.]

My child,
Last offspring of our noble family,
Thou enterst on the sacred privilege

Held by us through unbroken generations
Since it was founded. This has been the sum
Of my most ardent prayers. This is our day
Of days. The holiest office in the land
Is ours again. My child, see thou to it
That it remain unblemished.

HERO

(in a low voice, speaking mechanically).

Yes, I will,
Dear uncle.

PRIEST.

Now, good-night, and be prepared
To meet the people at the Gate of Counsel
At the appointed hour, to-morrow.

HERO

(as above).

Yes,
Good-night, dear uncle.

[Exit PRIEST.

HERO

*(alone, standing motionless for a few moments,
her arms hanging nervelessly down her*

sides, only her head and eyes moving in a dazed survey of her room).

 This, then, is the goal!
Is this thy countenance, fulfilment? This
Thy peace, attainment? Is this heaviness
The hand of Life, and does this empty stare
Convey the rich intent of being? Are Death
And Life so close of kin? Where are you
 now,
Spirits of service in a selfless cause,
With which anticipation strove to crowd
These sombre walls, to expel an earlier throng
That would not be denied? Were you mere
 phantoms,
Hiding your emptiness in glistening vestments,
Snatched thievishly from those you would dis-
 place,
Their rightful owners? Rally round me now,
In this, my hour of need!

*[Pause. A golden sunset light, re-
flected from the clouds, il-
lumines the room. She ap-*

proaches the window, looking out.

You golden clouds
Upon whose lofty brows the parting sun
Has placed again his fiery diadem,
You rouse enchanted visions that recall
Too well the days when, as the sunset fires
Melt in the gentle tumult of the sea,
My being burned with the inner fires of his,
And his, of mine. Where is the promised future
You set upon those golden citadels
And towers, Leander? Where our paradise,
Whose shimmering domes, and slopes, and jew-
elled gates
You made me see? Where is the endless train
Of dear fulfilments that you read for me
From every wave that tumbled at my feet
Its store of flashing treasures carried home
From those far hills of promise? Ah, Leander,
Tales must come true, lest in the bitterness
Of disappointment we despise the more
The meretricious skill that steals the semblance

Of truth. . . . Will those clouds be always
there,

To hold a mirror to the mockery
Of the wan phantoms of a buried past
Parading in the robes of living hopes?

[*The light fades out of the clouds.*

But, stay, dear phantoms; pause, ye glowing
forms.

Better a living semblance than the ashes
Of lifeless certitude that flutter down
The abyss of final night.

[*Darkness has gradually fallen.*

*She lights a lamp, placing it in
the window. CHRYSA, one of
the temple maids, is heard sing-
ing outside.*

Apple blossoms on the breeze
In abandon of release—

HERO

(*startled*).

The blossom song

In Sestos! . . . 'Tis Chrysa's voice. Poor,
untamed Chrysa!

CHRYSA'S VOICE

(outside).

Maiden of the wilful ways,
Are the flower curtains rent?
Wouldst escape the coming days?
Wouldst forego their rich intent?
Art a wild, unbridled thing
That was never meant to serve,
Or but spreading Fancy's wing
In a house of still reserve?

HERO.

Can wishes grow so tame, they stay their need
With dole of alien song?

CHRYSA'S VOICE.

Apple blossoms on the breeze,
Service over, comes release.

HERO

(giving signs of suffering).

Goddess, support me! . . .

[Pause.

How heavy is the air; the wind's off shore,
Driving the briny freshness of the sea
From the warm land. 'Tis blossom time, and
sweet

Must be the orchard air.

*[Opens the outer door, on the left;
stands in the door, looking out.*

What radiant forms
Are swelling on my vision, as if the clouds,
Kindling with silvery prescience of the moon,
Had brought to earth the miracle they work
On the far heavens! My hands reach out to
touch them,

And all my sense goes forth intent to drink
The misty light, their own. Dear apple-trees,
The year again repeats in you his vows,
And you devotedly acknowledge them
In your soft bridal garb. Beware! Vows fail

Sometimes, and there may be no other spring
To make renewals. (*Pause; closes the door.*)

[*Takes up the lyre in a preoccupied
manner; sings softly.*

Apple blossoms on the bough,
Light and Life possess you now—
Sweet are Light and Life to thee,
Maiden; Love waits on the way
Where thou drinkest thirstily
At the fountains of thy May,
With a new light in thine eyes,
And a wonder in thy heart
Where the troubled mysteries
And unbidden tremors start.

Apple blossoms on the bough,
Love——

[*Realising what she is doing, in
sudden terror.*

Priestess,

What are you doing!

[*Drops the lyre. In a burst of un-
controllable despair.*

Why did you not return
Before this day, Leander; or why did you
Return at all?

*[Breaks down; sinks upon the seat
by the window, weeping. After
a while, she dries her tears;
rises.]*

'Tis over. 'Twas a mood
Born of fatigue and the vague dread of newness.
I am strong enough to face the past, Leander,
Guarding its sweets without the numbing sting
Of foiled desire. Leander, be my friend
Henceforth; send the cool freshness of your
strength

To be my balm of healing; the clear flame
Of your brave spirit that never blurs the
edge

Of right discernment, to remain with me,
A light upon my darkened path. Thus will
I keep of you all I now may, Leander.

*[LEANDER'S voice (through the
window): "Hero!"]*

[HERO starts; in a voice and attitude in which terror, joy, and an adverse determination mingle.

HERO

(to herself).

Leander!

LEANDER

(his head and shoulders appear in the window).

Hero!

[Pause in which they look at each other.

HERO.

Go! . . . Go! . . .

How dare you seek me here!

LEANDER

(Leaps into the room. HERO steps back, erect and tense).

Be not afraid.

Let me stay but a little while. I shall

Obeys you when you bid me go. . . . Hero,

I disembarked this morning, after three
Long years of venture, bringing home the gain
Of hopeful toil, certain to find my Hero
The same I left. . . . Insidious death
amid

The hostile desolation of strange lands
Had been less cruel than this return!

[HERO *gives signs of distress.*

But no!

I have not come for weak complaint. Speak,
Hero,

One word of dear remembrance; let but one
Inflection tell that in your inmost being
The image of our love resists the pale
Corruption of this desert—

HERO

(*with anguished indignation*).

Is it brave

To array the issues of the past against
The present duty? Cruel 'tis, inhuman,
To pour the bitterness of present loss

Even upon the tenderest possessions
Of memory.

LEANDER.

Forgive me, Hero! Ah!
I have lost the measure of humanity
Since inhumanity has come to be
A sacred duty, sundering us who grew
As one.

HERO

(distressed).

Pray, leave me now. The penalty
Of your mad enterprise is death, and naught
The profit save the unending agonies
Of vain desires.

LEANDER.

Is it a vain desire
To stay the hand which deftly cuts from under
The present its live roots, destroying it
By stealth? Does not Death come in many
forms
Subtler than that which slays outright? But
give

One token that the spirit of our love,
Forsworn, is yet not spurned into the oblivion
Of things outcast; that the rich stream of life
Which warmly flowed through you and me as
one,

Still nourishes your spirit, single now,
And I, too, shall have faith to plant a future
Upon the ruins of past hopes.

HERO

(eagerly, correcting him).

A future

On the fruition of past hopes! Our love
Be thus a well of strength in both. Is not
A past that lives in us to prompt each action,
A present still? Why must we lay the hand
Of gross possession on Love's heritage
To hold its essence?

LEANDER

(with deep sincerity).

Grief's a coward, eager
To snatch at nostrums, temporising ever

With maladies it cannot cure. Hero,
In this last hour, we must not shirk, we two,
The direst sorrow which the unblinking years
Will not evade. Although we live henceforth
Within the presence of an undying past,
Yet shall our severed lives no more attain
Their fulness. Coming days demand the nur-
ture

Of new events. Languid they grow and wan,
Sustained alone by Love's late uses. Love,
Unmarred by flaws of feebleness or guile,
Spurns the drear mockery that rests content
With less than all, assuming lofty names
To hide its nature.

HERO

*(whose eagerness becomes more anxious, as if
she were trying her last resource).*

Are Love's offices
Wholly encompassed by the narrow sphere
Of creature ministry? The pettiness

And degradation of small services,
Sole keepers of Love's blessings? Can the
spirit
Extend unhampered wings when every fibre
Is lax with sensual ease?

LEANDER.

Think of my mother,
Hero. All of life's burdens she has borne,
Those endless little things, each one so slight,
Which slighted, suddenly accumulate,
Mountains of misery, crushing underneath
Their weight all lofty aims. Loving she is,
And glad, and wise, knowing the needs of all,
For having ministered to all the needs
Of those she holds the dearest. Can the hand
Of lovingkindness win the greater skill
For helping strangers, only by withdrawing
From those more near? Is there a life beyond
Life's fulness, which is yet not less but more
Than being? Does the spirit dwell apart
And yet inform all things?

[With a sudden burst of tenderness and desperation, extending his arms toward her; she steps back, with her arms held rigidly in front of her, as if to ward off a blow, and at the same time implore forbearance.]

Hero, my Hero!

Is this sweet spirit, whose host of living graces
Leap out from each familiar motion, dwell
In every tone, and look, and cherished contour
Of all your being; this spirit that was as one
With mine, is this another now, both living
And dead; a mocking semblance of the past
Without; within, the emptiness and death
Of a priest's phrases?

HERO

(overcome with anguish).

Ah! Leander. . . . Help me!

[He approaches her.]

No, leave me. . . . Help me by leaving me—

Do not

Torment me more. . . . It is too hard, Leander;

I never yet had to deny you, never,

Until this day. . . . I can no more. . . .

[Staggers as if on the point of falling; he takes her in his arms; she says faintly:

Help me.

[They stand together, he holding her; her head slowly seeking his shoulder.

LEANDER

(with great tenderness).

My beloved! Hero! Forgive me. I will be strong.

HERO

(still in his arms).

'Tis better now.

[Pause.

How strong you are, Leander!

[With a sad smile.

Even in the potency of this great pain

You cause, is strength.

[Looking up at him in radiant love.]

Ah! You are Life to me,
One touch of you revives me. You are of those
That cannot die. Leander, I was sad
And in despair, but now the heaviness
And gloom have fallen away like prison walls
Of darkness. Light has come again, and hope.
The vastness of the sea and starlit skies
Is in me, and the strength of the great winds,
As in those days when nothing was, save you
And I.

[A knock at the door is heard.]

HERO starts, leaves LEANDER,
moves toward the door. *Voice*
of the guard outside.

VOICE OF THE GUARD.

All lights must be extinguished at this hour.
That is the law. Lights might show the pas-
sage to the shore to prowlers of the sea.

[Voice ceases.]

HERO.

[Turning toward Leander; looking at him with an expression showing that she is endeavoring to reach a decision.]

'Tis time to leave me. . . . *(Starting.)*

But Leander

The guards are everywhere; there's no escape
Except. . . . How did you come? I never
thought

Till now. . . .

LEANDER.

I swam the strait.

HERO.

You swam! Without
A light to guide you through the dreadful reefs
That lurk, intent to set their jagged teeth
In your warm flesh?

LEANDER.

Your lamp showed me the way.

HERO.

My lamp? And now I must extinguish it,
That guards your life! Make haste, that I may
keep it
Till you are safe upon the open sea.

(With sudden abandon.)

Ah! Would I had the power of the sea
To carry you beyond the reach of pain
And danger.

*[Sounds of a disturbance without,
as of a pursuit. An impetuous
knocking at the door.]*

(HERO terrified, speechless.)

*[The knocking repeated more in-
sistently.]*

VOICE OF THE GUARD

(outside).

Priestess! Guardian of the Shrine!

HERO

(in alarm; in a low voice).

I must speak to him, Leander.

Pray, go into that room until I call you.

[Leads him into the inner room; bars the door. She turns toward the outer door, very erect, pauses slightly; then, with a determined step, approaches it. As she opens it the noises of the disturbance outside become somewhat more distinct. She remains at the door, calling.]

HERO.

The priestess is here, guard.

GUARD

(remaining outside unseen; in an excited voice).

The light must be extinguished immediately or I shall have to report to the priest.

HERO.

But why this haste?

VOICE OF THE GUARD.

Do you hear those noises, priestess? It

seems that one of those Abydan youths who came with their insolent leader, remained behind, hiding in the temple grounds. He was surprised with one of the maids of the temple. So one insolence begets a brood of others. The priest has issued strict orders to have our laws enforced. The alarm has been given to all the guards. They are pursuing the fellow now. (*With a laugh.*) He shall not escape us, by sea or land. But, pray, put out your light, priestess. It is against the law to keep it burning in a seaward window at this hour; and it may draw more of these night moths that seem so mad to have their wings singed.

[*Voice ceases.*

[HERO, *at first, as if dazed, closes and bars the door; returns to the room, full of conflicting emotions. Pauses in the middle of the room, looking as if fascinated by an inner prospect. An expression of terror grad-*

ually passes into one of acceptance. Approaching the lamp in a determined manner, she extinguishes it. There is enough light, as from an invisible young moon about to set, to disclose the sea through the window. HERO goes to the inner room, unbarring it, calling.

HERO.

Leander!

LEANDER

(entering).

Hero!

HERO

(*With something like the exultation of complete despair*).

All is lost, Leander.

[*Sounds through the window, as of men passing outside.*]

Listen! The coast patrol!

(Raising her hands in prayer.)

Ye Immortal Gods,
Save him! Life is so strong in him. But if
He is to die, then let us die together,
That in our death the unnatural division
Of this one day be blotted out, and we
Return together to the paradise
Of undivided love which I forswore.

*[Pause. Then dropping her arms,
turning to LEANDER and look-
ing at him in an ecstasy of love.*

The present vanishes. The past has risen
Again. It comes, an overwhelming flood
Of life, crowding each moment with a full
Burden of happiness . . . *(in complete sur-
render).*

Leander,
Your love shall be my love; your truth be mine;
By the strength of your spirit will I live.

*[They embrace. LEANDER draws
her upon the window seat,*

*w h e r e t h e y s i t s i l h o u e t t e d
a g a i n s t t h e s e a . T h e y k i s s
w h i l e t h e s c e n e c u r t a i n d e -
s c e n d s .*

CURTAIN

SCENE II

TEMPLE grounds outside of Hero's tower. The front of the tower, containing the main door, is seen in profile in the upper right corner of the scene. At the back, the rocky coast and the sea. Apple-trees in full bloom here and there about the scene, but so placed that the rocky sea passage and the tower are clearly seen through the centre. Time, immediately following the previous scene. Dim light.

[As the curtain rises, KLYTON and CHRYSA are seen cautiously moving among the trees.]

KLYTON.

We have eluded them for the time being, but they will soon be upon us again. Is there

no escape? Leave me, Chrysa, that you may not be made to suffer for my guilt.

CHRYSA.

Hush! There's the priest himself. Let us hide ourselves from him.

[*Exeunt together.*]

PRIEST

(*comes walking, absorbed in contemplation*).

Ah, Life! Why dost thou shun the measured
ways

Of order? Why wanton on the tangled paths
Unbridled passion spreads at will athwart
Wisdom's designs? Why even upon this day
Didst send thy rude hordes to invade these pre-
cincts

Of sacred peace? Thy brutal humour cast
A blot upon the solemn rite. And yet
More evil is afoot.

[*Distant noises of pursuit, calls
and countercalls. The PRIEST
stands listening.*]

The guards are out,
Hunting the latest breaker of the peace
Whose boldness tops Leander's.

[*Pause. All is quiet again.*

The hand of Fate
Stays never. The vain heart of man would set
A Sabbath after every new achievement,
To win fresh strength from quiet contemplation
Of failure and success. But sleepless Fate
Ere the last link in the endless chain of things
Is closed, already is at work, preparing
The substance of a coming one, and we
Must do his bidding.

[*Guards come through the bushes
from different sides; calls of:*

ONE GUARD.

I saw them turning toward the tower.

ANOTHER GUARD.

They may be among the rocks by the tower.

FIRST GUARD.

Close in about the tower!



[KLYTON and CHRYSA enter, rushing from their hiding-place, the girl leading the man by the hand. She kneels before the PRIEST. Guards, as they see them, give up the pursuit, retiring in several small groups to a distance, where they are little noticed during the following events.]

CHRYSA.

Priest, I alone am guilty. I lured him
Hither.

KLYTON.

No, priest! I only am to blame.
I stole into the enclosure. She could not
Prevent me.

CHRYSA.

He is a stranger, an Abydan,
Tilling his fields in peace. He does not know

Our laws. I made him come, assuring him
These grounds were open to our friends.

KLYTON.

She lies,
Believe me, priest, to save me. Give no cre-
dence

To anything impeaching her. Look at me.
Could this frail girl prevent a sturdy fellow
Like me from doing anything his heart
Was set upon? My heart was set on seeing
This maiden, priest. I love her, she loves me;
And so I came. Pray, let us go together.
Release her from her service that I may take her
With me and call her wife.

[*Pause. Both look at the PRIEST
in agonised expectation.*]

PRIEST

(*sternly*).

Sacrilege

Is the name of your crime; the penalty
Is death. The spirit of disorder thrives

On clemency, and boldness mocks at mercy,
Deeming it weakness. You are the second
youth

Abydos sends to-day to desecrate
These grounds. 'Tis time to establish an ex-
ample.

A judgment will be held for you to-morrow,
And since this girl attends the Chosen of
The Goddess, Hero has to sit in judgment
With me. Do not anticipate more mercy
From her young sternness. (*Calling:*)

Guards!

CHRYSA AND KLYTON

(*simultaneously imploring the PRIEST, on their
knees; while the guards are holding back*).

Take me, take me;
I am the guilty one! Have mercy, priest!
Have mercy!

[PRIEST, *with a set, hard face, mo-
tions to the guards to take them
away; the guards come to take*

*them. As they lay hands upon
CHRYSA, KLYTON in despera-
tion:*

Chrysa, though our bodies bend
To force, our joinèd spirits shall remain
Unbowed. If we were halt and weak and
barren

His pity would go out to us. Ah, priest,
You hate all that are young and strong, in
whom

The stream of being runs full and warm; you
hate them

Because your shrinking heart keeps whispering:
They are your lords. . . . Your heart, priest!

Like a snail

It drags its clammy phlegm of weariness
Which it dubs duty, o'er the bloom-fringed
House

Of Life. Beware! Life's patient. But one day
Her sudden foot will stamp you out, and Life
Will keep on her untroubled way, not knowing
Of you and all your works.

PRIEST

(motioning to the guards to take them away, without speaking. After they are gone, he walks a few steps, then stops, musing; half-puzzled, half-scornful).

What is this Life,
This mutinous thing, of which Leander vowed
To-day he held the key; and now these two
Are more initiates? What was it, set
A light as if the Immortals smiled on them,
Upon their brows and in their eyes even while
He spoke, and she approved, those words of
hate

And blasphemy? What is the value of it
That each would gladly lose his own to save
The other? Is the madness of desire
So great that, flouting its own selfishness,
It turns to seek fulfilment in its own
Undoing?

[Pause. The light of dawn appears over the sea.

Ah! The night was rife with riddles

That subtly steal upon our sense, like darkness,
And pass as subtly. Dawn's at hand to wake
Day's sober purposes.

[Slowly exit.]

*[Dawn breaks gradually. Slight
mists hang over the sea, which
become suffused with a pearly
light, moving and lifting, but
not quite disappearing. The
door of the tower opens and
HERO steals out alone, carefully
looking about in all directions.]*

HERO

*(beckoning toward the door of the tower, calls
softly).*

Leander!

[LEANDER issues from the door.]

*HERO leads him to the centre
of the scene, pausing near the
narrow mouth of the rocky sea
passage, the many sharp angles*

*of which partly reveal, partly
conceal its course. Every trace
of suffering and anxiety has
disappeared from their faces.
They are completely absorbed
in each other and the present.*

HERO

(pointing to the sea).

Look! The dawn!

LEANDER.

Slowly he rises

On the floor of the waters, gathering might
To lift the earth from the abyss of darkness.

HERO.

His fires he kindles in the mists, and they
Gently awake, and stir, and roll away,
Setting a vast division 'twixt sea and sky.

LEANDER.

All heaviness is lifted and made fair
In miracles of Dawn's transforming flames.

HERO.

Like birds a-wing amid the vast twin-blue
New hopes fly out into the boundless spaces.

LEANDER.

The air is like a less substantial sea,
Its limpid freshness lays a living touch
Upon each sense.

HERO.

It seems to penetrate
The core of being; one with our blood, our
breath;
A sweet coercion mingling with a sweet
Abandonment.

LEANDER

(in a passionate outburst).

Ah, Love! How beautiful
Thou art! Ah, Life! How great! *(embracing*
HERO).

HERO.

You are Life!

LEANDER.

You are
Greater than Life, for you hold all its power
And sweetness prisoners of your heart.

HERO

(in his arms; joyously and intimately).

Leander!

LEANDER.

Hero!

HERO.

Do you remember that—that day—

LEANDER.

Years, years ago, under the apple-trees?—

HERO.

When you—

LEANDER

(teasingly).

Kissed me the first time?

HERO.

Kissed me!

No, 'twas you

LEANDER.

'Twas you! Nor was it the first time.

HERO.

It was the first I knew it for a kiss!

LEANDER.

How did you know?

HERO.

It was a flame, more fierce
Than fire—

LEANDER.

More sudden than a bolt from heaven!—

HERO.

And then, it flared between us. . . .

LEANDER.

As a wall
Blotting the earth, and sky, and every thought—

HERO.

Ev'n you; and yet I knew 'twas you, it must
Be you, for there was nought but you!

LEANDER.

And I

HERO.

Stood gasping, and with every breath I . . .

LEANDER.

Drank

The fire—

HERO.

Into my inmost being, and then—

LEANDER.

My life began—

HERO

(nestling close, with a laugh).

Ah! but I was afraid!

LEANDER.

Of me?

HERO.

No. . . . Yes. . . . No; of the flames!

LEANDER.

You, too?

HERO.

At touch of you they ran beneath my skin
Like lightning shooting branches through the
 night
Above the sea.

LEANDER.

And when I heard your voice,
The rustle of your skirts,

HERO.

 Your step afar,
Even the mention of your name, the fires
Came rushing from their hidings (*hiding her
 face at his bosom*).

LEANDER

(after a slight pause).

 Have they come
Again?

HERO

(raising her head).

Have they not come again! *(long kiss, then disengaging herself).*

'Tis time,
The guards wake soon.

LEANDER.

Your lamp will light my way
Again to-night?

HERO

(looking at him full).

It will.

LEANDER.

And there will be
No parting after!

HERO

(simply).

I will follow you.
Your way shall be my way.

LEANDER.

What is the promise
And pride of this vast light beside the boon
One little lamp will send on its shy ray
To me across the waters!

HERO.

I shall count
The ripples bursting at my feet. Each one
Will shorten, by a moment, the interval
Day sets between us.

LEANDER.

Hero, my beloved,
Farewell.

HERO.

Farewell, Leander.

[LEANDER *disappears*; HERO *remains standing a while, looking out upon the sea*. LEANDER *reappears*.

LEANDER.

Hero, dearest,

I will charge each ripple that I meet upon
My way, with sweetest burden of my love.
They will be faithful bearers, for the sea
Loves you and me.

HERO.

And I will take their message
Upon my lips and hands as they discharge it
Sparkling upon the shore. Would I could keep
them
Unchanged, that they might tell me more than
you
Knowingly gave them. Ah! They all will
come
Flushed with the sweetness of your touch, eager
To boast of it to me, and taunt me with it,
As one deserted!

LEANDER

(with loving pedantry).

Have no fear, beloved,

Love cannot lose his tokens unawares;
They have no being save in the sweet concurrence
Of mutual devotion. Interlopers
Might steal the semblance, but could not withhold
The essence from its rightful owner.

HERO

(startled, in a suppressed voice).

Hush!

I hear sounds as of footsteps. Go!

[LEANDER *exit*.

HERO

(remains listening. After a while she raises her head, saying:).

Leander, you are Life. I have no fear,
No evil can o'ertake you.

[Anxiety has disappeared from her face. She is erect, her face radiant. Raising her arms toward the sky, now quite light,

she speaks as if pronouncing an invocation.

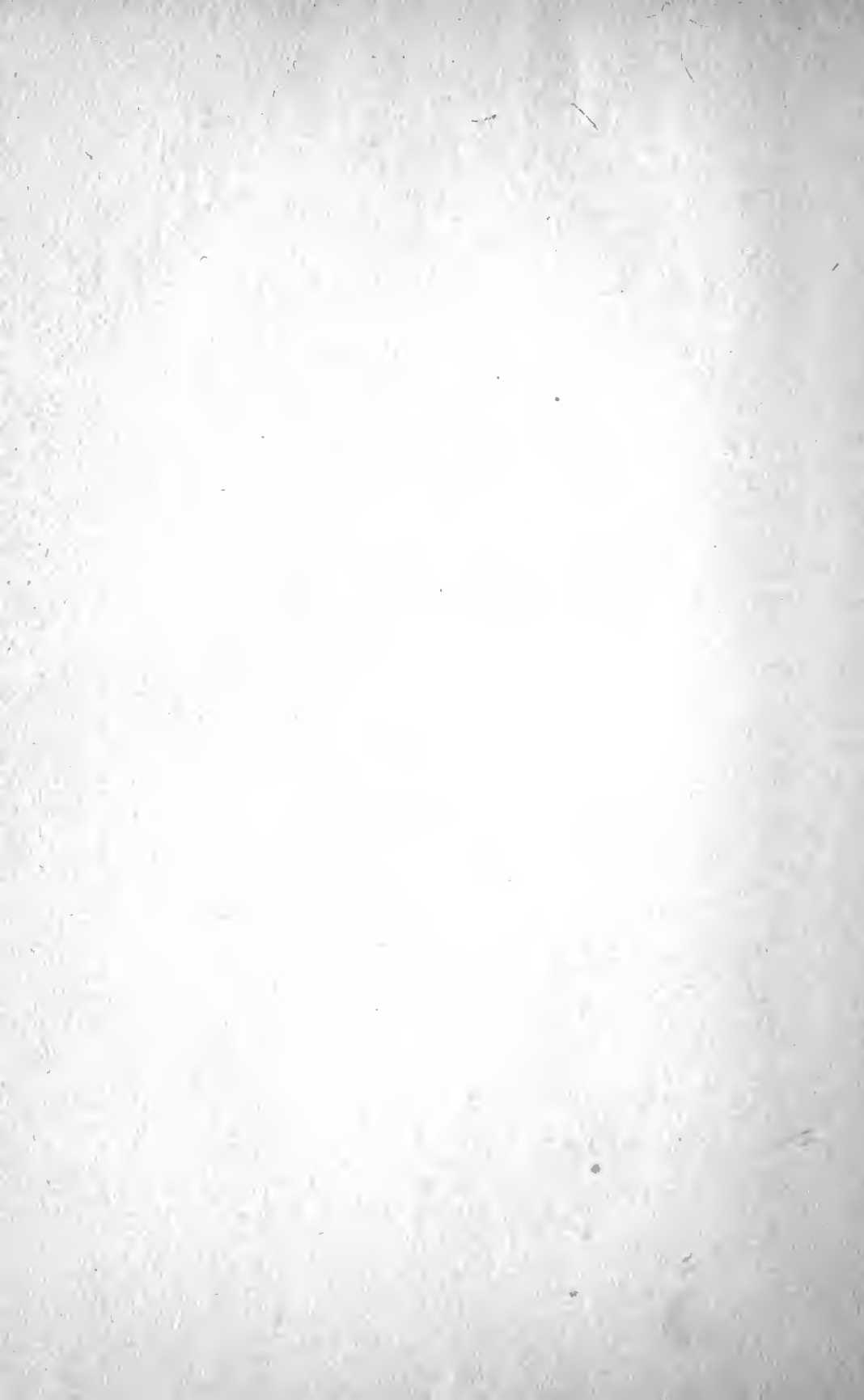
Slowly the opal flower of morning rises,
Opens, and spreads, and shines on the marvel-
ling sea,

And from its golden heart, through misty guises,
Wells, with the tides of light, thy love to me.

[Exit into the tower, closing the door.]

[As the curtain begins slowly to descend two guards come running from left toward the shore. They point repeatedly toward the sea, making excited gestures. They finally stop upon the shore, peering intently seaward.]

CURTAIN



ACT IV

Act IV

SCENE I

*A*BYDOS. *The scene as in Act I, but without the decorations of the festival. Leander's father, Peithonomos, and Naukleros, his comrade, are discovered.*

PEITHONOMOS.

You do not think, then, that Leander plans
War on the priest. Our young men are incensed

O'er yesterday's events; and now the news
Of Klyton's threatened fate has been as oil
On fire. One leader like Leander now,
And all the good achieved by generations
Through patient rectitude, will be consumed
In one swift conflagration.

NAUKLEROS

(with forced assurance).

Rest assured.

He has kept his counsel in the ship since we
Parted, last night, bidding the watch admit
No one. He left alone, but a short while
Ago. No doubt, he'll soon be here.

PEITHONOMOS.

I hope

It may be so. Naukleros, for three years
I have longed to see my only son. But if
I found him leagued with lawlessness and crime
I'd cast him off. *(Pause; softening more and
more.)*

Go; look for him and bring him
To see his parents whom he hardly stopped
To greet. We'll have some tales from him.
We'll make

A night of revelry. *(Looking up at the sky.)*

How sultry 'tis!

The clouds are gathering in our weather corner

Southwest, where the heaviest storms are
 hatched. Make haste
 To fetch him ere it breaks.

[*Exit* PEITHONOMOS.]

NAUKLEROS

(*No longer hiding his anxiety*).

I wish I knew
 What to make of it. Leander's not the man
 To mope alone, coddling inactive sorrow.
 What stratagem could he have laid that shuns
 Friendly communication?

(*Seeing LEANDER coming from left back.*)

There he is!

The Gods be praised! (*Calling:*)

Leander!

[*Enter LEANDER, dressed in the
 Doric tunic, as in Act III. He
 is preoccupied, the fixedness of
 a single purpose giving a cer-
 tain rigidity to his face and
 every gesture. He raises his*

hand, demanding silence. There is desire of secrecy expressed in his bearing, but no furtiveness. He evidently wishes not to be detected, yet would not be arrested in his purpose, whatever happened. He walks slowly toward NAUKLEROS, who advances partly up stage, showing that LEANDER'S aspect renews his anxiety.

LEANDER.

I was looking

For you, Naukleros.

NAUKLEROS

(with forced gaiety).

And I for you. Well met, then.

LEANDER.

How are my parents? Do they deem their son
Unloving? Are they troubled at the events
In Sestos yesterday?

NAUKLEROS.

They have forgotten
It all. Your father, a few minutes hence,
Asked me to find you. They would make a
night of it
With tales and feasting. Come, let's hurry to
them,
They are sick for sight of you.

LEANDER.

I have to speak
To you, Naukleros.

NAUKLEROS

*(his anxiety rising sharply; trying to cover it
by gaiety).*

Now? Alone? Are they
State secrets?

LEANDER

(ignoring NAUKLEROS' words).

I have planned another venture
For which I count on you.

NAUKLEROS

(relieved, yet not without misgivings).

That is Leander!

Brave action is the cure for hopeless sorrow.

Count on me! I am weary of the land

Already. Countless petty cares contract

The soul amid these fields and streets, all num-
bered

And named; my courage shrinks amid these
prisons

Of tame convention. Enterprise grows timid;

The spirit that makes it leap the ordered fences

Walling initiative, turns to intrigue,

And ratlike gnaws a hole beneath. Count on
me!

Give me the uncharted seas, the lands and
mountains

Surveyed by no man, and the men not branded

Like toilsome oxen, with the shaming stamp

Of custom. . . . But there's time enough to
talk

That over when the ship is docked. Come now!
Your parents want you.

LEANDER.

I must go to-night.

NAUKLEROS.

Leander!

LEANDER.

Hear me out. The ship must be
Ready by midnight to weigh anchor. At that
hour

You take the long boat with the six best oars-
men

As near to Hero's tower as the shore reefs
Permit. You'll see a light in Hero's window.
Upon a line drawn from it to the light
At my ship's masthead, keep the boat, until
I swim to you. I then will guide the boat
Through a safe channel to the shore and take
Hero aboard. Then to the ship to seek
New life and happiness in foreign lands.
I count on you, Naukleros.

NAUKLEROS

(aghast).

But your parents!

Leander, think of them!

LEANDER.

Do not corrupt

My heart against my purpose now. A crisis

Like this requires a mind that can suspend

Its dearest wish until the issue.

NAUKLEROS.

And what

Will be the issue? Do you know your father?

He has sworn to cast you off if you o'erturn

The public peace. If he should learn your plan

He'd be the first to warn the priest.

LEANDER.

The greater

The need of haste.

NAUKLEROS.

Though your heart bar out

Your parents, it cannot exclude the Gods;

This plot is sacrilege.

LEANDER.

An empty word

A priest contrived that children might invest
With superstitious dread his godless whim.
The Gods withhold their countenance from such
Perversion of their will.

*[Darkness has gradually fallen
during this scene. A flash of
distant lightning from the left
is followed by a low rumble of
thunder of some duration.]*

NAUKLEROS.

Delay this night!

No man can hold his course, when such a storm
Turns night to blackness.

LEANDER

(with a sort of slippancy).

The lantern of the storm
Will light my way when in the trough o' the sea
I miss the light of Hero's lamp.

NAUKLEROS.

'Tis madness
To think of swimming in this sea when all
The wild Ægean hurls its weight through this
Strait passage.

LEANDER.

It will bear me all the faster
To th' other shore.

NAUKLEROS

*(stepping between LEANDER and the sea as if
to intercept him).*

You shall not do it; not
Unless you kill me first.

LEANDER

*(drawing his dagger; with dangerous
calmness).*

Stand off! The power
That rules me now has all the bitter strength
And fierce compulsion of the sea. I must
Go now, over your body if you force me.
(With great warmth:)

But no, Naukleros, there's a better weapon
That you will not withstand. (*Sheathing his
dagger.*)

This is my hour
Of greatest need. You cannot fail me now
Who never failed, Naukleros.

NAUKLEROS.

I owe my life
To you, Leander. . . .

LEANDER.

No, not thus. Friendship
Is greater far than the mere breath of life.
Do not dishonour it by any price
You set on it.

NAUKLEROS.

Leander, I will do
As you desire.

[*They embrace.*]

LEANDER.

There is no time to lose.
At midnight, then!

*[He turns, runs toward the shore,
flinging off his upper garment.
As he disappears there is a
bright flash of lightning and
heavy peal of thunder, much
nearer than before.]*

NAUKLEROS

(raising his arms imploringly toward the sea).

Thou lov'st him, sea; protect him!
Thou God of Storms, watch o'er him!

*[A gust of wind and distant rum-
ble of thunder.]*

CURTAIN

SCENE II

OUTSIDE Hero's tower in Sestos, as in Act III, Scene ii. Time, immediately following that of the last scene. The priest and Hero are discovered. It is almost night, yet light enough to see everything distinctly. Heavy, threatening clouds, with occasional distant flashes of lightning, without thunder, are seen over the sea.

PRIEST

(sternly).

Hero, you still refuse to pass the sentence
Of law upon that fellow from Abydos
And his lewd mistress?

HERO

(distressed and perplexed).

Do not press me, pray!

I do not see my way to do it.

PRIEST.

The law

Supplies the way.

HERO.

Something in me rebels

Against the penalty.

PRIEST.

For generations

This law has been the safeguard of our faith.

HERO.

Why should it be a crime for them to love

Because she owns . . . (*hesitates*) this faith?

PRIEST.

Hero, you strike

At our foundations!

HERO

(frightened).

Pray, be not offended!

Uncle! Be lenient with them. . . . They did
not know. . . .

They did not think. . . .

[*Embarrassed pause.*]

PRIEST

(displeased).

I shall defer the judgment
Until to-morrow.

HERO

(in a burst of relief).

The Gods be praised! . . .
(Then, with more moderation, to the PRIEST.)

I thank you,
Dear uncle!

*[A flash of lightning and heavy
but distant peal of thunder over
the sea. HERO, starting:*

The storm is coming. I must go
Within, I have some duties there.

[Exit into tower.

*[During the following, now and
then signs of the approaching
storm.*

PRIEST

(alone; distressed).

Hero!

But yesterday, severe with all the sharp

Austerity of youth. And now! What could
Have wrought the sudden change in one
Of Hero's constancy?

*[The two guards that appeared at
the end of the Third Act, enter
from the left, somewhat embar-
rassed and hesitating, as if not
sufficiently sure of themselves.]*

FIRST GUARD.

Priest, we saw something at dawn that looked
suspicious. We couldn't exactly make it out,
and have been doubtful whether it was anything
of importance. And yet we saw too much to
regard it as nothing. Will you hear it?

PRIEST.

Tell me precisely
All that you saw, no more. Withhold all vague
Surmises.

FIRST GUARD.

At early dawn this morning we heard a noise
as if some one plunged into the sea.

SECOND GUARD.

The sea was quite calm, you know.

PRIEST.

Well?

FIRST GUARD.

We ran toward the place where we heard the sound and saw what looked like the head of a man swimming away from here.

PRIEST.

From here?

FIRST GUARD.

Yes. It was right here by the tower.

PRIEST

(becoming interested).

The tower? Did you
Make sure it was a man?

FIRST GUARD.

Not quite sure, priest, in the mist.

SECOND GUARD.

The morning mist hung over the sea. It lifted a little near the shore, but came down again in the middle of the strait, so that the swimmer, or whatever it was, disappeared in it as he swam away.

PRIEST.

You say, this man
Swam toward the open sea?

FIRST GUARD.

Yes, I should say he headed straight for
Abydos.

PRIEST

(startled).

Abydos?

SECOND GUARD.

Yes, priest. And because one of those insolent Abydians was caught here last night, we finally agreed we ought to report to you.

PRIEST

(to himself).

From Hero's tower!

(To the guards.)

Who are the best known swimmers hereabout?

SECOND GUARD.

There's Naukleros. *(Brightening up.)* But the greatest of all is Leander. He won all the races.

PRIEST

(aghast; to himself).

Leander!

SECOND GUARD.

Oh, Leander used to swim the strait. He went faster than you could row a boat.

FIRST GUARD.

The swimmer this morning swam faster than any man I ever saw. He *(pointing to* SECOND GUARD*)* thought it was a porpoise. But porpoises don't swim alone, and straight for Abydos!

PRIEST.

Have you any more to tell?

FIRST GUARD.

No, priest. That's all.

PRIEST.

Thank you.

[As the guards turn to leave, some of the rocks jutting out into the sea passage take a light, first flickering, then moving, and finally remaining stationary, as of a lamp, lit, carried to, and left in the tower window, facing toward the sea. The guards start, noticing it.]

FIRST GUARD.

Priest, there was a light in the tower window last night. I had to insist several times on its being put out. There it is again. It might light the passage through the rocks for any prowler of the sea.

PRIEST

(showing profound emotion; to himself).

A light in Hero's window, lighting
The passage! *(To the guards:)*

Stay!

[Pause. The PRIEST betrays signs of a terrible inner struggle. He finally becomes calm. His face is rigid, with an expression of hard resolve. To the guards:]

Go! Call the priestess. I
Request to see her. You remain to guard
The shore.

[Guards go to the tower, knock at the door. The door is opened by an unseen person, to whom the guards speak, pointing toward the PRIEST, who stands motionless, looking fixedly at the tower. It is dark. Thunder and lightning, intermingled

with gusts of wind, more frequent. HERO comes out of the tower, advancing toward the PRIEST. Her bearing betrays anxiety which she tries to cover. The guards station themselves back, near the passage through the rocks. They are noticed only by occasional movements.

PRIEST

(with unnatural calmness).

A lamp is burning in your window,
Hero. Our law prohibits lights that might
Betray our shore to adventurers.

HERO

(with forced unconcern).

But who
Would come a night like this?
[*The storm increases in severity.*

PRIEST.

Extinguished. The light must be

HERO.

Very soon I'll do it.

PRIEST.

Immediately. Yes,

HERO.

I need the light.

PRIEST.

The law wants darkness.

HERO.

I . . .

The priestess is not subject to such rules!

PRIEST.

Hero! Remove the light!

HERO.

I cannot do it.

PRIEST.

Then I must do it to save you from yourself!

[*He makes a motion as if going to the tower.*]

HERO

(in terror).

I'll do it myself. . . . That is the priestess'
room,
Let no man enter it!

PRIEST

(raising his hand).

Let no man enter it!
(Turning as if to go toward the tower.)
It must be done.

HERO

(seizing his arm).

You shall not do it. It is
My room.

PRIEST

*(struggling to free himself, gradually moving
toward the tower).*

I must!

HERO

*(in her losing struggle with the PRIEST utters a
succession of desperate and helpless:).*
No! No! . . . No! . . . No, No, No! . . .

[They have arrived at the steps leading to the tower door. With a sudden movement the PRIEST frees himself from HERO, flinging her from him. He dashes into the tower, slamming the door. Sounds of its being barred inside. An instant later the light on the rocks disappears. HERO, who has half fallen, recovers herself, rushes up the steps after him, throwing herself against the door, which does not yield. After trying the door several times, she sinks upon the top step, moaning.]

Stay! I will tell you all.

Only stay!

[Pause. The door is unbarred and opened. HERO rises, looks toward the open door in speech-

less terror; then shrinks back down the steps, continuing on the level ground, constantly facing the door. In the door appears the PRIEST, holding the extinguished lamp in his hand. He pauses a while, then slowly descends the steps, looking fixedly at HERO.

HERO.

Pray, give me the lamp.

PRIEST.

I cannot.

I keep the lamp to-night.

HERO

(rushing toward him; on her knees, clasping his).

Imprison me!

Kill me! Cast me into that sea!

(White foam now and then leaping over the rocks.)

But leave
 The light this one night. Uncle, dearest uncle!
 Save him! Ah, save him! He is fighting there,
 There, in that horror now! If the light fails
 He dies, alone, forsaken; his heart will call
 Me murderer. Save him, pray, save him, and I
 Will be your slave henceforth.

PRIEST.

I cannot save him.
 But you, I will!

(To guards, who come running:)

Hasten, give the alarm!
 The guards in force patrol this coast throughout
 The night! Neglect no cove, nor slightest
 channel

That might give access to the shore.

(Holding out the lamp.)

Take this
 To my house. Bid the steward keep it
 Safe till I ask for it myself.

[FIRST GUARD *takes it. The*
guards are about to leave when

HERO *rises in madness of desperation.*

HERO.

Stay, guards! (*They halt.*)

'Tis I, the Chosen of the Goddess, bid you!
Return the lamp to me! 'Tis mine, and I
Alone may have it.

[*The guards hesitate, looking from the PRIEST to HERO in embarrassment.*]

PRIEST

(*with decision*).

Go! I am your master.
You take my orders.

[*The guards turn to go.*]

HERO

(*beside herself*).

Stay, or I, the priestess,
Will curse you.

[*Moving as if to pursue the guards. The PRIEST steps in*]

front of her, extending his arm to halt her. She recoils. Suddenly she reels, staring in front of her, screaming:

Is it you, Leander? You
Are Life. They cannot slay you. Do you see
Your Hero's light to guide you? . . . No? .
. . . Not yet? . . .

I'll bring it nearer . . . nearer. Ha! . . .

Blackness,
Blackness!

[Falls unconscious at the PRIEST'S feet.]

PRIEST

(calling back the guards).

Here, guards! Come quickly!
[The guards come running back.]
(To FIRST GUARD:)

Run, summon
Attendants to the priestess. She is ill.

[Exit FIRST GUARD.]

(To SECOND GUARD:)

You help me bear the priestess to her room.

[While they carry HERO into the tower, enter the MADMAN, from the right. The storm breaks with terrible force, with lightning, thunder, a great wind and rain. White foam leaping high over the rocks. PRIEST and guard, carrying HERO, disappear in the tower. Enter three maids, hurrying into the tower. PRIEST and guard issue from the tower door, closing it. Guard exit to right. PRIEST alone in the storm.]

PRIEST

(giving signs of great suffering; not noticing the MADMAN).

A mighty house has fallen; a sacred cause
Lies buried in the ruins. Ye Gods, whose voice

Sounds in the storm, the judgment rests with you
 Alone! Find you the guilty one, speak you
 The sentence!

*[During the following scene,
 guards pass and repass now
 and then along the shore.]*

MADMAN

*(shambling up to the PRIEST, tapping him on
 the shoulder).*

*[The PRIEST turns abruptly.
 Throughout this scene the
 storm is at its height.]*

Ho, friend! By your looks, you are on the
 same errand as I. It is an errand of love. Let
 us go together!

PRIEST.

Leave me, friend. I must not be
 Disturbed.

MADMAN

(to himself).

He, he, he! He, too, wishes to get rid of
 me. How every one loves me! I don't love

him, so I wish to keep him till I love him. And then—(*with a gesture of disposing of an imaginary person*)—he goes!

PRIEST.

Tell me your errand quickly, friend,
And leave me.

MADMAN.

I am looking for the Quintessence of Life!

PRIEST

(taken back).

Of Life! He, too, of Life!

MADMAN

(whispering in his ear).

Yes, and I am on the track of it to-night.
But it is a secret. It is the Great Nothing!

PRIEST

(startled; to himself).

Nothing! The Great

MADMAN

(picking an imaginary flower).

Do you see this rose?

PRIEST.

Go on. Yes.

MADMAN

(tearing off the petals of an imaginary rose and flinging them theatrically to the winds).

Well, I am picking its petals now, one by one, one by one. Look. Do you know what I am going to find? Its heart, he, he, he! When I have picked all the petals, then I have the heart of the rose. That is the Great Nothing.

PRIEST

(startled, as if a fearful idea is beginning to dawn on him).

Ah!

MADMAN.

Are you afraid? I am often afraid of the Great Nothing; when all is calm and I hear children laughing. But when it is like to-night,

then I am glad and come out to see the storm, picking the petals of the world and scattering them. This is a great night! How the petals are flying! He, he, he! It is as if the storm would get at the heart of things. Then we shall have the Quintessence of the Gods. The Great Nothing, that is the God! He, he, he!

PRIEST

(shuddering).

Am I

Awake? Is this a nightmare, or has he
Come from the blackest corners of my soul
To taunt me with their ancient horrors?

MADMAN

*(pointing to the shore rocks over which white
foam is seen leaping).*

Do you see them peeping over the rocks?
He, he, he! I had a wife, and children, and
friends. I picked them all, like a rose; one by
one, one by one, until I had the pure Nothing-
ness of Love. The Great Nothing, that is Love.

It's all the same; the rose, the Gods, Love. The Great Nothing, that is the secret. He, he, he!

PRIEST

(agonised; lifting up his hands).

Ye Gods!

The burden is too heavy. Speak to me
Out of this night of anguish. Take my life!
I tried to hold the purpose of my life
True to your service. Make an end. I can
Not bear it longer.

[A blinding flash of lightning, immediately followed by a fearful crash of thunder.

MADMAN

(terror-stricken).

[The PRIEST shows during this passage signs of an increasing mad fascination, as if entering into the MADMAN'S spirit.

Hooh! I am afraid! The bosom of the Great Nothing is opening. How cold and

black! Oh! Oh! The serpents are coming out of the darkness. People say, they are the winds in the grasses. But I know better. They are serpents. They are trying to run away from the Great Nothing because they are the enemies of the Gods. (*Shrieking.*) They will swallow us, you and me. (*Calmer.*) But the Gods will overtake them. He, he, he!

PRIEST

(*grasping him, eagerly.*)

Say that again, that last.

MADMAN

(*leaping away in terror.*)

Do not handle me roughly. I might break. (*With a silly pride.*) I am not of flesh and blood, I am of a finer stuff. I am made of glass, so that the Great Nothing can shine through me and illumine the world. Do you wish to extinguish the Light of the World?

PRIEST

(starts violently at the last words; then tries to possess himself; finally, in simple faith).

The Immortal Gods will help me. I must seek
In prayer their counsel.

[Slowly exit to right.

MADMAN

(looking after him).

He, he, he! How he loves me. He tried to
break me, he loves me so. *(Feeling of himself.)*
But I am quite whole. I must keep out of his
way, though; he's dangerous!

*[Stepping behind each tree as if
seeking shelter from a pursuer.
The storm from now on abates
gradually. Enter two guards
from the left.*

FIRST GUARD.

What a fearful night!

SECOND GUARD.

The storm is abating now.

FIRST GUARD.

That may be. But look at the sea! (*Pointing into the distance to some point unseen by the audience.*)

SECOND GUARD.

Can you make out Elephant's Back?

FIRST GUARD.

Well, you know how high it is. The waves sweep clean over it. Not foam, mind you, but dark water.

SECOND GUARD.

By Neptune! It will go hard with any one that was caught out in this weather.

[*They pass on, by HERO'S tower.*]

FIRST GUARD.

They say the priestess is raving mad in there.

SECOND GUARD.

Over the storm?

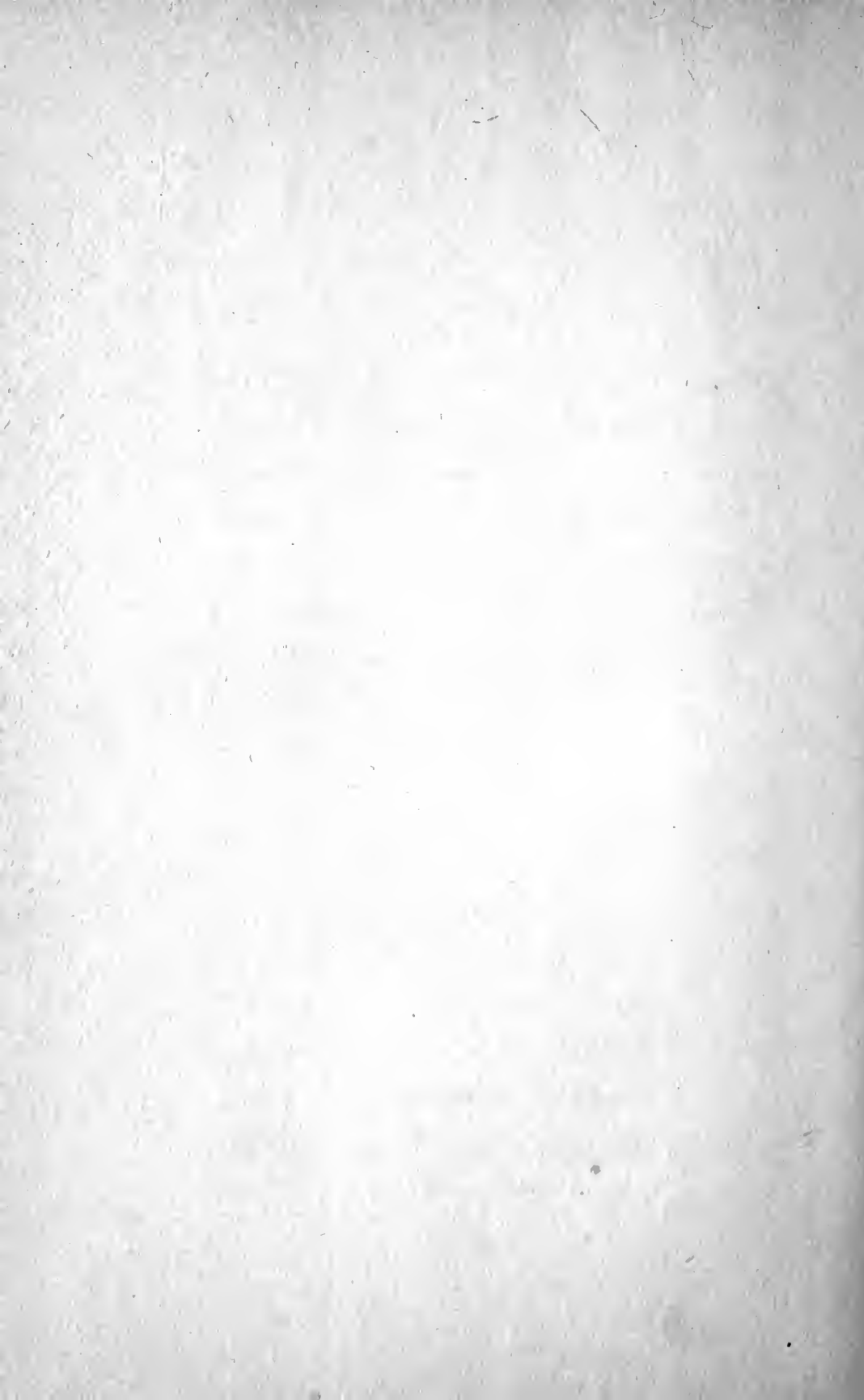
FIRST GUARD.

Guess again! People don't go mad over a bit of wind and water.

[A cry from the tower.]

CURTAIN

ACT V



Act V

THE same scene. It is early morning. All is glistening dewy freshness and peace. A clear sky with a rising sun. The sea is calm, showing no traces of the storm. Fresh seaweed is scattered over the rocks, and a large heap of it on the beach in front of the sea passage between the rocks.

[The door of the tower opens. In it appears HERO with the maids that came in the preceding scene to attend her. HERO pauses a moment at the door. Then they all descend.]

PHILANTHË

(one of the maids, in a gay manner, trying to cheer HERO).

Look, priestess, how calm the sea is. If it

were not for the drops falling now and then from the leaves, and the seaweed on the shore, one would not believe that there had been a storm at all.

HERO

(to herself, as if repeating a story she has told to herself many times before).

My signal failed. The lamp outlasted scarcely One flash of lightning. My poor ray could not Outspeed the dazzling javelins of the storm.

Leander never started. *(Turning furtively to the sea, but rapidly averting her face from it again.)*

The Gods were good
To him. The sea loves him. It gave him
warning.

PHILANTHË.

I feel so light, as if I could fly. Ah! Priest-
ess, how beautiful it is to be alive.

HERO

(still to herself, but less absorbed).

The morning seems to come on spirit's wings,

It is so free and light. All heaviness,
Whose name is death, has gently fallen away.

PHILANTHĒ

(drawing a deep breath).

Ah! Take a deep breath, like that, priest-
ess! It washes your soul so clean you feel as if
you had been made new again.

HERO

*(somewhat comforted, involuntarily doing as
PHILANTHĒ has bidden her; smiling a lit-
tle; then speaking raptly as if in adora-
tion).*

Ah! Such must be the breath of Life that
meets

The immortal Gods upon those shining heights
Where they arise to accept the adoration
Of the returning sun. It must have been
Thus to the first men when the earth and sky
Brought forth the morning; when the new-born
sun

Could wake no memory of heavy things;
When expectation could foresee fulfilments
Greater than promises, and did not shrink
With fearful doubt.

(She is depressed again.)

ANOTHER MAID

(trying to divert her).

Priestess, look at that large heap of seaweed
the waves have piled up, there at the rock pas-
sage. I have never seen such a heap there be-
fore. Let us look for shells in it.

HERO

(to the maids).

Pray, leave me now,
I am quite well. The terror of the night
Has left me. You, Philanthë, ask the priest
To see me. He will find me here. I wish
To speak to him.

[Exeunt maids.]

*[HERO alone; moves as if to go to
the sea passage in the rocks;*

but hastily turns away, looking fixedly at some point on the left, straight in front of her. She acts as if she felt a fearful unseen presence drawing her to the edge of the sea, and again repelling her. She looks now and then fearfully and hesitatingly around, as if trying to muster up courage to face it; but immediately turns away again with an abrupt, almost jerky movement of her head.

HERO.

The Gods were kind. If he
Were lost, all of Abydos would now be
Afloat to search for him. No anxious prow
Darkens the radiant sea.

*(Again trying to look around at the sea, but
quickly turning her head away.)*

A fiend of darkness,
With malice fraught, priest; so my madness
saw you
Last night. Forgive me! Now, I know you
walked
In the mantle of mercy, guarding him
From death, and me from murder. In that
sea
No light would have availed.

*(Trying once more to look at the sea, furtively;
but again averting her head from it quickly.
Then, speaking with determination:)*

What foolish fear
Possesses me, as if an awful presence,
Half drawing me, and half repelling, stood
Behind me, beckoning, at the passage? I
Must turn straight on it, to dispel it.

*[With her hands clenched at her
sides, arms rigidly extended
downward, she turns toward
the passage. A very brief
p a u s e ; then she advances*

*straight toward the passage;
stops half-way.*

Behold!

'Tis gone. Yes, I can face the sea now. I
Can look even upon this deadly passage
Whose hungry maw had to content itself
With these poor mangled seaweeds.

[Advances toward the heap of seaweed. Suddenly starting back.

What is that,

That white thing?

[She emits a terrible scream; then rushes forward, throws herself upon the heap of seaweed, frantically snatching up and throwing away a few handfuls of weeds. She is now holding LEANDER'S head, which is hidden by her.

Leander! Leander! Speak to me!
Speak to me! Leander! Leander!

[Busying herself over him franti-

cally; snatching the weeds from his body and scattering them about her, without rising or turning away. She rises, turns toward the audience, standing rigid; with a white and expressionless face, saying mechanically:

Dead. Leander, dead.

[Pause. An illumination spreads over her features. She turns toward the body, falling upon it. On her knees.

Leander! Dearest! So you would not wait
For me upon your journey? Stole away
To win the start of me! Was that fair play?
Did I not promise I would follow you
Where'er you led? *(Drawing his dagger.)*

Ah, but you left a key
To unlock the way you went! Delay a little,
Wait, wait, that I may overtake you.

[Stabs herself.

Wait!

I'm drawing near, Leander, near!

[She dies upon his body.]

[Enter PRIEST from the right.]

PRIEST

(with a certain affectionate buoyancy).

The Gods be thanked! Hero's herself again.

There is no sign to indicate Leander

Was mad enough to affront the Gods. As for

The future, I will take precautions, boy;

I and your father. Hero, child, where are you?

(Sees HERO's body.)

Ah! Hero!

*(Rushes toward her. Kneels down, taking
her lifeless form in his arms.)*

Dead. . . . Beside Leander's body. . . .

(Rising, lifting up his hands.)

Ye, Immortal Gods, have spoken, but your sentence

(brokenly) Is all too heavy for me!

[Enter, running from the left, a

GUARD.

GUARD

(*awestruck*).

Gods. . . .

PRIEST

(*quietly*).

Guard, your message.

GUARD.

Naukleros has come into the harbor commanding an Abydan boat. They wish to search the coast.

PRIEST.

They may come. . . .

[GUARD *exit in haste*.

PRIEST

(*turning to the bodies*).

The Gods have spoken.

The Gods have joined these two. . . . Hero,
child,

This joinèd death holds for you more of worth

Than the great life I planned for you!

(Overcome by grief.)

[People of the temple come running from the direction in which the GUARD left; whispering together; grouping themselves near the bodies.]

PRIEST

(rising, looking slowly about him; motioning to GUARD, who approaches).

Release the prisoners. . . . The Gods have spoken. . . .

[Enter by the passage through the rocks, a boat containing NAUKLEROS and Abydan oarsmen, who disembark.]

NAUKLEROS.

Woe! Woe! Leander! Oh, ye Gods of Life,
How could, how could you break your fairest
image!

PRIEST

(to NAUKLEROS).

Take her with him. These two may not be parted.

One common grave shall hold their ashes; thus
The immortal union of their spirits find
A counterpart on earth.

[NAUKLEROS *and the oarsmen*
carry the bodies into the boat
while a chant is played. All
the Sestans crowd noiselessly
toward the shore, turning their
backs upon the PRIEST, whose
presence they seem to have
forgotten. The PRIEST, with
bowled head, looking neither
right nor left, leaves slowly to-
ward the right. Simultane-
ously with his departure, the
boat is seen starting, NAU-
KLEROS and the oarsmen inton-
ing the chant. The sea is re-

splendent with a great morning light. The people of the temple remain motionless upon the shore, looking after the boat, and listening to the chant, which continues, gradually diminishing, after the boat has disappeared.

NAUKLEROS AND THE ROWERS

(chanting as they row).

A darkness fell upon the stricken world,
The earth was empty as a drained cup;
And men knew Death, and in their anguish
cried:

Why have the Gods of Life forsaken us!

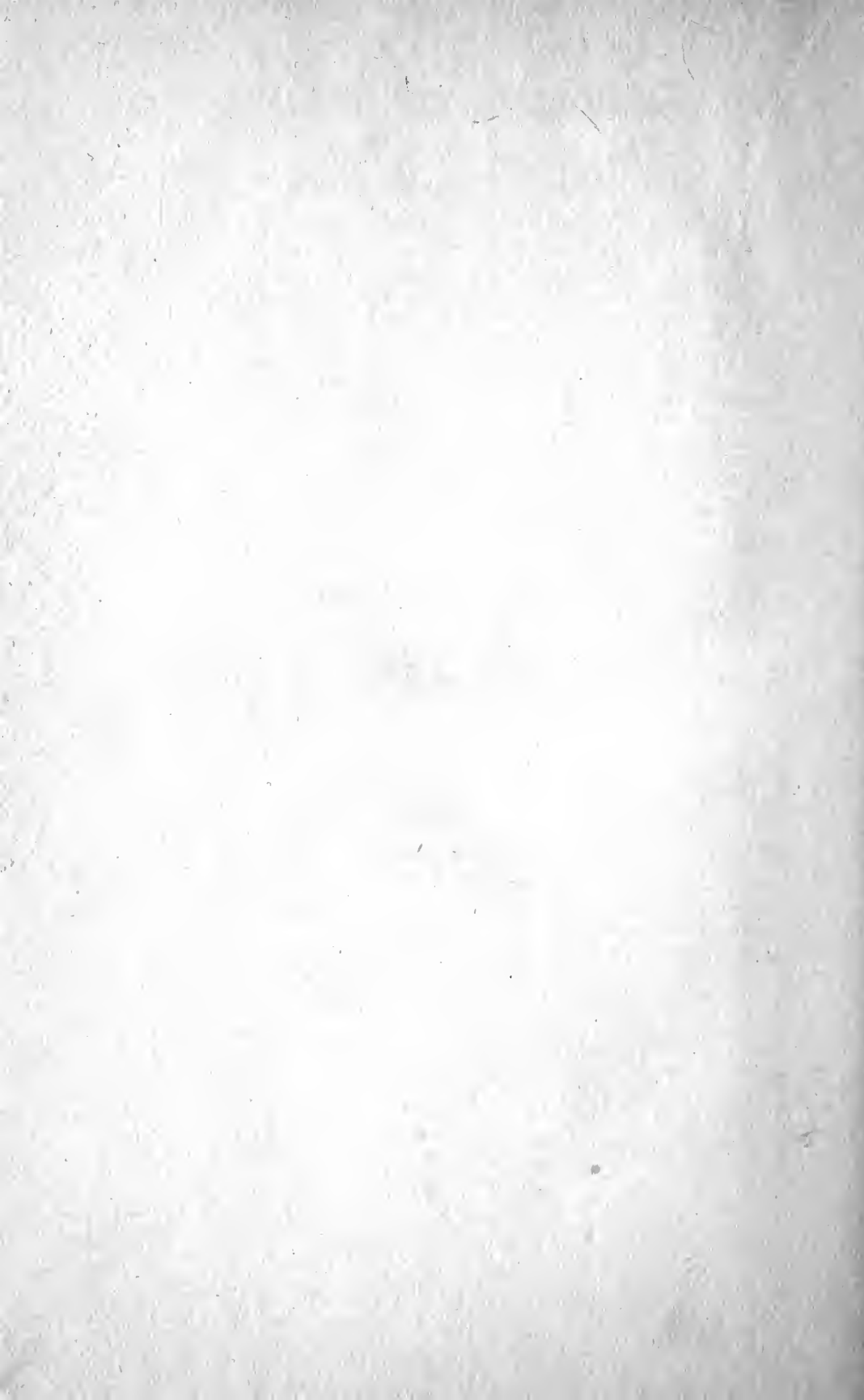
The Gods read the faint hearts of men, and
smile.

They send abroad the legions of the Light,
Dispelling ever the dark waste of Death,
Ever renewing Life upon the Earth.

Ye that would be the servants of the Gods,
Obey the voice of Love within your hearts.
Love is the sacred guardian of Life,
Knowing the deepest purpose of the Gods.

*[The curtain begins to descend at
the last word, falling slowly,
while the chant diminishes to
a mere murmur.]*

CURTAIN



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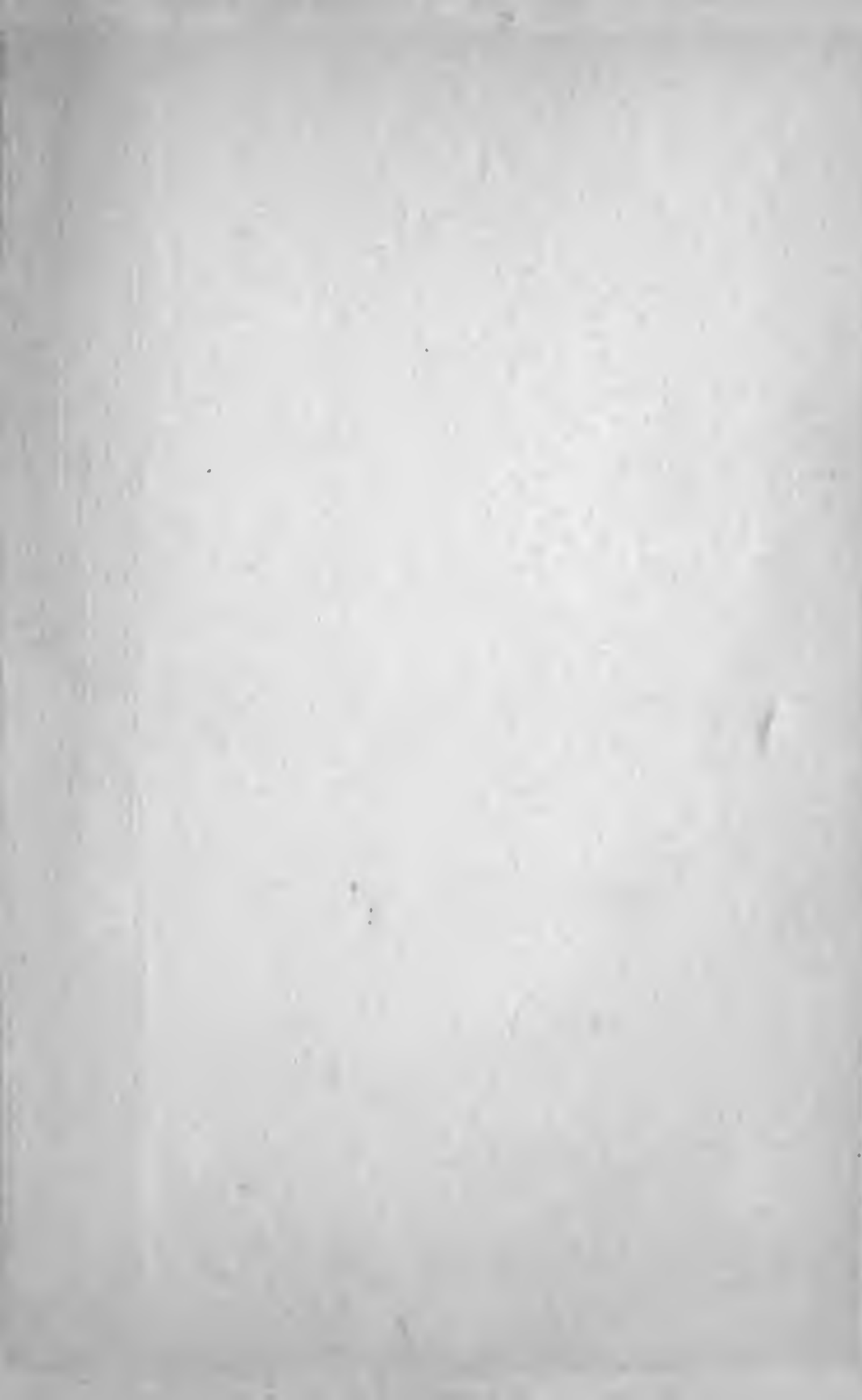
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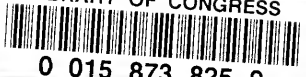
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